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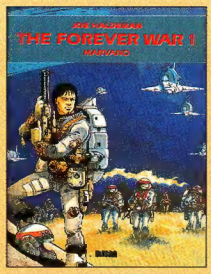

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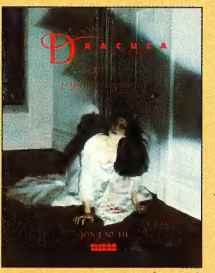

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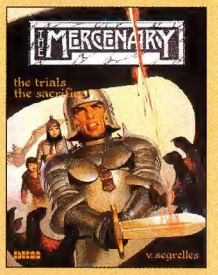

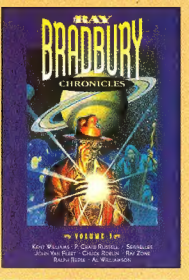

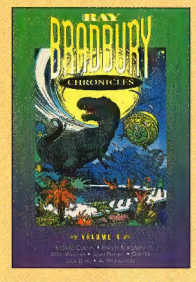

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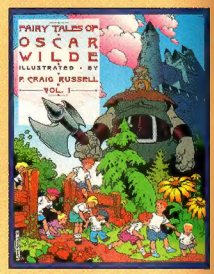

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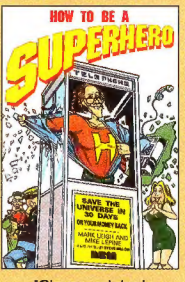

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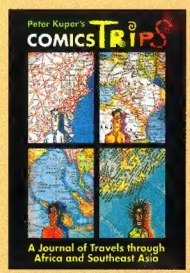

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COMICS scene

Jack Kirby was a comics legend (see page 12).

CS #2 Cover Art: Jack Kirby/Characters Copyright 1982 Jack Kirby

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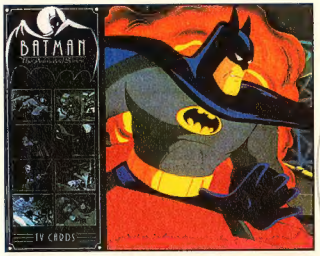

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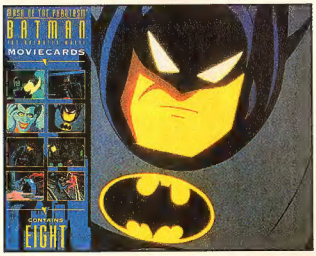

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WORD BALLOONS

Subliminal Suggestions

Comics fans have always been interpreters of subtlety. You study a comic book panel in which X-Acto Man's alter-ego (mild-mannered COMICS SCENE Art Director Jim McLernon) displays teeth clenched, expression in cold grimace, eyes aglitter. And you *know* the artist is trying to tell you something.

What could it be? Unarmed, and in his civilian garb, is X-Acto Man about to face the power of Master Dominator? Battle Wormsmith, Chaffeur to the Stars, for the soul of Wacky Woman? Diaper his daughter, X-Acto Baby?

Well, more than likely, that subtle expression means he's about to slice up type in new and creative ways as he does for every issue, including this one.

Observers of sublety as we are—myself included, because I would have bet on the diapering bit—we sometimes don't grasp the true meaning of that expression on X-Acto Man's face. And that is: it has *none*. It is *meaningless*. It's just what the artist felt like drawing at the time.

You see, I've noted with bemusement some readers' willingness to find deeper meanings in what we've published. It's almost akin to reading tea leaves to predict the stock market. Let me try to translate a pair of these subliminal suggestions. To wit, "You gave the story on the *Wacky Woman* mini-series five pages in color, but that piece on *Scream Queen* was only three pages and in black & white. Do you hate *Scream Queen*?" Well, perhaps I do, but the *real* answer is the *Wacky Woman* creators had much more to say—hence a longer story—and lotsa color art to illustrate the article. The *Scream Queen* scribe was, well, less articulate, making for a shorter amount of text—and since we only had black & white photocopies of *Scream* stuff, it was a story that need not run in color.

Or, "There must be some significance to the order in which you run stories in COMICS SCENE—like from best to least or things you like to what you dislike." Actually not. It all has to do with *pacing*. And pacing is determined not only by a story's length and color art availability, but by bylines (we prefer not to run two stories by the same writer consecutively, and unlike fanboy pseudozines, we don't allow writers to hide behind aliases), opening impact (will the article look better if it opens with a splashy image on a right-hand editorial page or another piece of art on a left, like this very page) and advertising (how many ad pages are there, where should they go?). Plus, there's little reason to print stories about different characters from the same publisher next to each other, whereas it may sometimes be a good idea to place related articles, even by the very same writer, adjacently. Is this making sense? I'm trying *not* to be subtle.

Often, we place an article in the back—like this issue or last—merely because that's where we happen to have five more color pages. No other reason. But sadly, there sometimes *is* significance—as there is this time, with a tribute to a giant featured first in our article lineup. Just as we were about to go to press, the legendary Jack Kirby died. The loss to comics is incalculable. To me and many others, Jack Kirby simply *was* the American comic book. As Will Murray relates on page 12, his past collaborators offer a warm farewell to the King.

Remember the cover to COMICS SCENE #41? Cool, wasn't it? That was created especially for us, with a dash of Bravura, by Howard Chaykin. And our thanks to our

Art: Howard Chaykin

Malibu friends for their help in providing it. Now, that piece of art can find its way into your hands. Five signed suitable-for-framing special *Power & Glory* prints have been made available by Malibu for CS's readers.

Here's what you do: Send one postcard only (absolutely no envelopes, please) with your carefully printed name and address (street/city/state/zip) to Power & Glory, c/o COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Avenue South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. Send by regular mail only. No overnight mail or FAXes. Neatness counts; any illegible addresses will be disqualified. Only one entry per person or per address. Any and all multiple entries will be discarded. All decisions of the judges are final.

The contest is open to all, except employees (and freelancers) associated with Malibu Comics Entertainment, Bravura and the STARLOG GROUP and all affiliates, subsidiaries, suppliers and advertising agencies. No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited.

All entires must be received in the COMICS SCENE offices no later than May 2, 1994. A random postcard drawing will then be conducted and the prizes sent out. Please note: No responsibility is assumed for any lost, misdirected or late entries. Best of luck.

—David McDonnell/Editor

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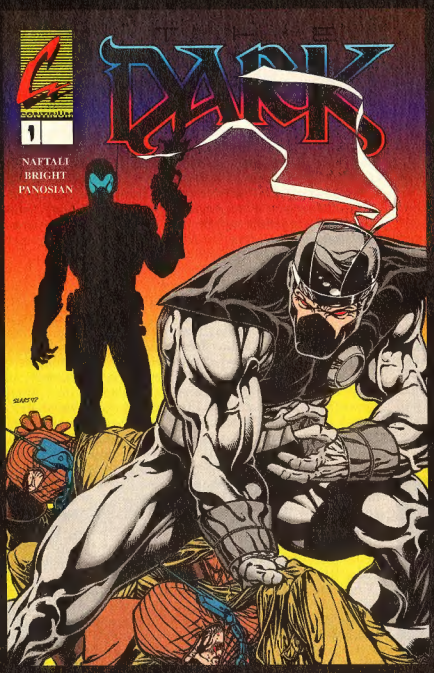

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ANIMATION SCENE

Streamline Pictures is unleashing Yoshiaki Kawajiri's *Wicked City*—a violent tale of sex and monsters—in America.

Huey's New Days

Tiny Toon Adventures: The "Banned" Episode is finally available! "Night of the Living Pets," written by Paul Dini, was a third-season (1992) story as part of "Toons from the Crypt," in which Elmyra's dead pets return from the grave bent on revenge. Fox TV's Broadcast Standards & Practices deemed the story unsuitable for airing. But Warner Bros. bypassed the TV censors, premiering the episode at the 1993 San Diego Comics Convention, and later making videocassette copies available as of February 24. Titled *Tiny Toon Fiendishly Funny Adventures*, it also contains "Duck in the Dark," "Little Cake of Horrors" and "Hare-Raising Night." It retails for $12.95.

Other new home videos from Warner Bros.: *Tiny Toon Big Adventures*, containing "Journey to the Center of Acme Acres" and "A Ditch in Time"; and *Tiny Toon Island Adventures*: "No Toon Is an Island," "Buster and Babs Go Hawaiian."

Anyone Want to See New Baby Huey Cartoons? Harvey Comics Entertainment thinks so. They've restarted their animation unit, Harvey Famous Studios, to do a weekly Sunday series, *The Baby Huey Show*, for syndication by Claster TV this fall. Thirteen half-hour episodes will feature one new short accompanied by two classic Harveytoons shorts: *Baby Huey* and *Herman & Catnip*, produced by Famous Studios in the 1950s, restored to their original soundtracks. Updated situations will have Huey at the day care center while Mom works and suffers separation anxieties.

This fall, *Gargoyles* come alive on Disney's "Action Friday."

All Disney Afternoon Art: Copyright 1994 Buena Vista Television

The new studio has an interesting mix of talent: VP of production Maria Rodriguez was a supervising producer on *The Simpsons*, producer/director Bob Jacques came from *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, directors Henry Gilroy and Douglas McCarthy worked on *Taz-Mania*, writer Tom Minton wrote episodes of *Mighty Mouse* and *Animaniacs*, writer Bill Kopp wrote *Roger Rabbit* and *Taz-Mania* shorts and produced, directed, wrote and designed *Eek! the Cat*, and creative consultant Jerry Beck—formerly with Streamline Pictures—is an authority on classic cartoons. Jacques' Carbunkle Studios in Vancouver will do pre-production work; Big Star Enterprises in Korea will handle the animation chores. *The Baby Huey Show* is scheduled to premiere September 17.

Next year, new Casper shorts will be made to tie in with the live-action *Casper, the Friendly Ghost* feature from Amblin/Universal (which stars Christina Ricci and Cathy Moriarty). Then, new Richie Rich cartoons will cash in on the release of Warner Bros.' live-action *Richie Rich* (which stars Macaulay Culkin).

Hanna-Barbera's New TV Shorts: The Cartoon Network hadn't planned on original programming until 1995, but with more and more viewers tuning in—some 8.5 million households—Turner Broadcasting has commissioned its animation studio, Hanna-Barbera, to make new cartoon shorts. Some will introduce new characters, others will re-interpret old H-B favorites. Plans are to broadcast 48 shorts, premiering one every two weeks beginning late this year or early 1995.

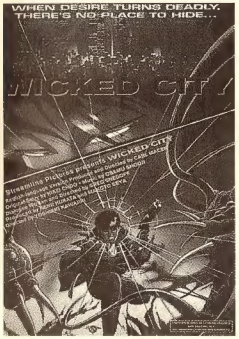
Joseph Barbera is directing "Dino: Stay Out," line-produced by Dan Hunn, from an outline by Stewart St. John. William Hanna directs "Hard Luck Duck," line-produced by Bob Onorato from an outline by Tony Benedict. MGM characters George and Junior return in "Look Out Below," directed by Pat Ventura (directorial debut), featuring animation by animator *par excellance* Mark Kausler. The shorts are produced by Buzz Potamkin and Larry Huber.

A Major Overhaul of the Disney Afternoon begins this fall, as 65 episodes of *Disney's Aladdin* replace *TaleSpin*. (In addition, *Aladdin* will broadcast 13 episodes on CBS Saturday mornings.) *Shnookums & Meat*, a series of shorts that first appeared on CBS's *Marsupilami*, were popular enough that Disney decided they could headline their own series for "Monday 'Mania" afternoons, *The Shnookums & Meat Funny Cartoon Show*. Does that mean the rest of the week isn't funny? No. That's because "Action Fridays" will be set aside for *Gargoyles*, Disney's first dramatic cartoon series. The time slot for the rest of the week will feature reruns of *Bonkers*.

Disney's Manic Mondays continues the zip-n-pose animation approach popularized by John Kricfalusi. In fact, many of the artists on *Shnookums & Meat* used to work for John K. at SPUMCO. Shnookums (Jason Marsden) is a spoiled housecat; Meat (Frank Welker) is a proud "dog's dog." Whenever their owners leave the house, the kitty litter hits the fan. *Eek! the Cat*'s Bill Kopp is *S&M*'s writer, story editor and co-producer; Jeff DeGrandis is co-producer and director.

The second short is a four-minute weekly cliffhanger: *Tex Tinstar: The Best in the West*. The heroic Tinstar has to rescue his gal, Monica Betty Lou Sue Veronica, from the clutches of the evil trio, the Wrong Riders.

The third short, *Pistol Possum* (a.k.a. *Pith Possum: Super Dynamic Possum of Tomorrow*),



Wicked City Art: Courtesy Streamline Pictures

sounds like a woodland version of *Darkwing Duck*. He masquerades as newspaper copyboy Peter Possum by day, and defends Possum City by night. With his trusty sidekick, Obediah the raccoon, the nocturnal knight roams the arboreal trails in his Possummobile to battle Dr. Shockter and his mutant animal friends. *Possum* and *Shnookums* are eight-minute shorts.

Thirteen episodes begin January 1995.

Gargoyles Take on the Dark Night: This 13-episode series is being produced almost totally overseas, from storyboards to final animation, by Disney's Japanese studio. It seems the show will emulate the dark, mysterious style of *Batman: The Animated Series*. Indeed, producer Frank Paur and story editor Michael Reaves had previously worked on *Batman*.

A thousand years ago, a band of powerful gargoyles defended a Scottish king's castle from nightly attacks. At dawn, they petrified into stone statues. One night, the leader of the Gargoyles, Goliath (Keith David) was lured from his post. The castle was ransacked, and the surviving Gargoyles were held accountable. As punishment, the king's sorcerer cursed them with a spell that made them sleep for 1,000 years—to the year 1994.

Corporate tycoon David Xantos acquires the castle and moves it atop a Manhattan skyscraper. The Gargoyles awaken in time to defend it against a commando-style attack. Goliath saves the life of police detective Elisa Chavez (Salli Richardson), and the two begin an unusual friendship. The Gargoyles learn to adjust to 20th century America, among them Hudson (Edward Asner), Brooklyn (Jeff Bennett), Lexington (Thom Adcox), Broadway (Bill Fagerbakke) and angst-ridden Bronx. Xanatos also brings back Goliath's former love, Demona (*Next Generation*'s Marina Sirtis), who threatens to destroy all of mankind. And, it seems, Xanatos himself may not be entirely trustworthy.

Gargoyles premieres prior to Halloween 1994 with a four-part serial.

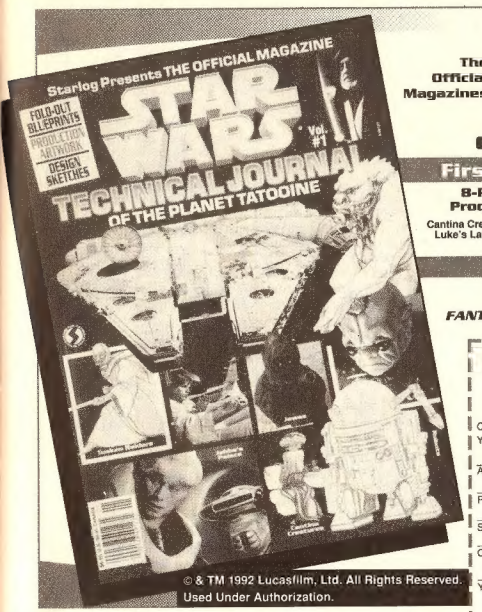
Look What We've Found! That's the title of the Cartoon Network's program that reruns two half-hours of obscure 'toons. It airs twice a month (repeating the second time). *The Gary Coleman Show* was February's offering, and *Mr. T* roars on this month.

Looney Tunes on Laserdisc: Warner Bros. Home Video has recently released six new laserdiscs of post-1948 Warners cartoons, available for $34.98 suggested retail. There are 14 episodes per disc, with backcover commentary by animation historian Jerry Beck. The laserdiscs are: *Guffaw and Order: Looney Tunes Fights Crime, Hare Beyond Compare: More Bugs Bunny Classics, Longitude and Looneytude: Around the World With Looney Tunes, The Road Runner & Wile E. Coyote: If at First You Don't Succeed..., Sylvester & Tweety's Bad Ol' Putty Tat Blues, Wince Upon a Time: Foolhardy Fairy Tales and Looney Legends.* This is your opportunity to own *complete* shorts, uncensored by the networks, with no distracting network logos on the prints!

From Russia With Lovely Animation: *Film Roman Presents: Animated Classic Showcase* imports several award-winning cartoons from Moscow's Soyuzmultifilm Studios, among them Hans Christian Andersen's "The Ugly Duckling," Oscar Wilde's "The Canterville Ghost" and the Brothers Grimm's "Pot of Porridge." The first season offers 12 one-hour programs that began last September, syndicated by Bohbot Entertainment.

Where's That Ghost? In case you're wondering what happened to *Space Ghost: Coast-to-Coast*, its Cartoon Network premiere was delayed to March 4. The planned 13 episodes have been reduced to six, with audience response determining whether the caped crimefighter can hack it in Hollywood. Space will be interviewing such celebrities as Judy Tenuta, Susan "Stop the Insanity" Powter, Timothy Leary, Bob Denver and the Bee Gees. Eat your heart out, Arsenio.

—*Bob Miller*



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...In the face of all the recent competition, I'm glad to see that you guys have continued to produce a great zine. You've managed to avoid becoming a "fanboy" magazine like *Wizard* and *Hero*, two publications that tend to cover only the "hot" books, which usually results in nothing but articles about Marvel and Image. Thankfully, COMICS SCENE publishes articles on a wide variety of comics including, but not limited to, the Marvel and Image titles. True, not every article you publish is of interest to me, but that simply means that you're trying to cater to all tastes, which is something I appreciate.

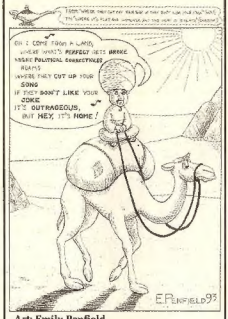
I would like to thank you for a couple of articles you have published in past issues. Harley Jebens' interview with Jeff Smith in issue #39 was wonderful. I had been hearing things about *Bone* for a while, but it was your article that finally persuaded me to check it out. After reading that Smith is a fan of many of my favorite books and strips, such as *Uncle Scrooge*, *Pogo*, *Asterix* and *The Tick*, I knew this guy's book had to be something special. Now, I'm proud to say that I've become a "Bone-a-file!"

Another great article was Darcy Sullivan's on *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* in #40. I'm a big *Sam & Max* fan, and I'm glad to see that they are finally getting some attention! Although it had to wait for a computer game to be made, your story did the duo justice, since a good amount of the article was about the comics themselves. I am disappointed to hear that Steve Purcell will not be doing *The Sam & Max Show* limited series, though. At least I have the computer game to keep me from going sane until Purcell decides to publish another *Freelance Police* comic. The past one-shots are some of the funniest things I've ever read!

I have some requests for articles in future issues. The upcoming *Tick* cartoon on Fox is something I would like to see covered. It would be a great follow-up to your interview with Ben Edlund way back in COMICS SCENE #7.

Another article I would dearly love to see is one on Marvel's *Transformers: Generation 2*. This book desperately needs some publicity and there is definitely a story there, especially with the Transformers' 10th anniversary coming up (complete with a special Transformer convention this July!). Plus, it's my opinion that an interview with *Transformers*' fantastic writer, Simon Furman, is long overdue. The original *Transformers* series was improved a thousand-fold when he became the writer on issue #56. With his great stories and some great artists (Geoff Senior, Andrew Wildman and Stephen Baskerville), the series became what I consider one of Marvel's best. Unfortunately, as it was a dreaded "toy-comic," most of the general comic-collecting public never became aware of this improvement and the book was cancelled at issue #80 (Oh, the *pain!*). However, now it's *back*, with Furman once again at the helm. In this current age of comic books with lackluster stories, *Transformers: Generation 2* is a cut above the rest, and I hope more people realize this before it's too late.

One last thing. Whatever happened to the Scene section at the beginning of every issue?



Art: Emily Penfield

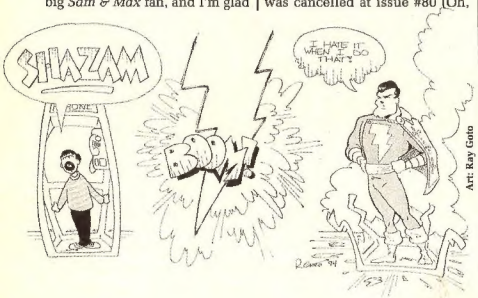
You know, the collection of small articles on new books and such that didn't warrant a full article? I don't suppose you would consider bringing that back, perhaps in a format similar to Bob Miller's great new Animation Scene column.

Anyway, keep up the great work, and thanks for a great magazine!

Alex Hart
25 Rocklyn Court
Corte Madera, CA 94925

...I would like to address the "new Batman" issue. Actually, I think the whole concept is so ludicrous, it's not worth writing about. But sometimes silence can be interpreted as approval, so I must speak out. There is only *one* Batman: Bruce Wayne. No one else, period. Nothing more needs to be said.

As for the people to blame, I think DC acted very irresponsibly and possibly inexcusably in this cheap marketing gimmick (and despite what DC claims, that's all it is), aimed solely at the consumer who only buys comics for collectability, or a free trading card or holographic cover, while thumbing their nose at us loyal, longtime Batman fans. They have said so much in their letter columns: "We find it boring to run a treadmill...if you like the old, just read your back issues...we want a modern, '90s Batman, we can't come up with any good stories for Bruce Wayne anymore." Well, hell, fire the damn creative teams and hire some who can! At least the Superman team was more straightforward. They said, "Don't worry—Supes will be back soon." The Batteam keeps contradicting itself. They lead us to believe this change is permanent, then they hint that Bruce will return. But the big turn-off is they always treat readers like me very rudely with their "go read your back issues if you like living in the past" attitude.



I, personally, have not enjoyed a Batman comic to its fullest since before the death of Jason Todd. That act killed part of the magic for me. It may never be recaptured. But this—this is the limit. I'll tell you something else. Some "assistant" editors whine that they want Batman darker...that Bruce can't get darker, so they will create a darker Batman. You know, this whole idea of "dark" is getting kind of stale and redundant. I, for one, would not mind at all if Batman became a little lighter, his exploits a little more fun and outlandish (but not campy), if he developed a sense of humor and cracked jokes, and became more *inspirational* (kind of like Tom Mankiewicz's *Batman* script). Said editors may think Batman should not be a role model, but I say Bob Kane did not create the Batman as a depressing anti-hero.

The Batman is my favorite hero. Because of the skyrocketing prices of comics, I gave up all other titles just so I could get all the *Batman* books. And this is the thanks I and others like me get for this kind of sacrifice: a spit in the face. I think I may stop buying Batman comics for a while. I'll take this opportunity to see what Spider-Man is doing, how Hulk, Thor, and Iron Man are taking care of business. Maybe one day soon, Steve Englehart will be editor, Bruce Wayne will be back to normal, Silver St. Cloud may be back in town, and maybe even Dick Grayson will be a 17-year-old Boy Wonder again. The magic will return and this whole period from 1988 to the present will be disregarded by historians—just as the Batwoman-aliens-time travel period of the late '50s-early '60s—as never happening.

Am I traditional? Am I old-fashioned? You bet! DC can continue to push out this garbage under the Batman name...but as for me, I would rather be watching reruns of *The Partridge Family*.

Come on...get happy.

Lee Solomon

Sterling Heights, MI

...I have been a regular reader of COMICS SCENE for years and continue to enjoy your magazine immensely. I would especially like to commend you on your coverage of the great EC Comics of the '50s. That is brave in light of the fact that ECs are not "hot" with the cover-enhancement crowd.

Since HBO's *Tales from the Crypt* is maintaining its popularity and since the shows' plots originate from the original EC stories, why not an article (or series of articles) on how the artists and writers feel about these adaptations. Recently, I was delighted to successfully contact Johnny Craig, an artist/writer for *Vault of Horror* and *Crime Suspenstories*. He provided some brief insights on his "take" on the HBO series. My point is if I (a mere fan) can contact these EC luminaries, COMICS SCENE can do an even better job.

Even if contacting Craig, Feldstein, Elder, et al. is not workable, I'm sure comics fans would appreciate an article on the current Russ Cochran reprints of the original EC mags. These are being lovingly done, with superior printing, new letters pages, etc. And I am shocked that *The New Two-Fisted Tales* #1 was recently published with no fanfare at all. Even though published under the auspices of Byron Preiss Inc. and Dark Horse, it carried the "EC Comics" imprint via a redesigned EC logo. This was the first "new material" EC comic since late 1955 or early 1956. Seems to me that's historic!

Keep up the good work and try to include more EC-related articles as you're able. Thanks for a great magazine.

David R. Burlington

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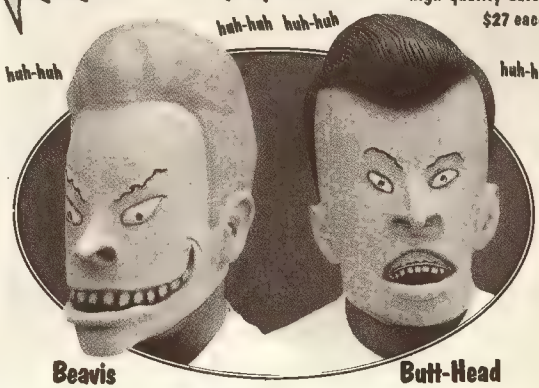

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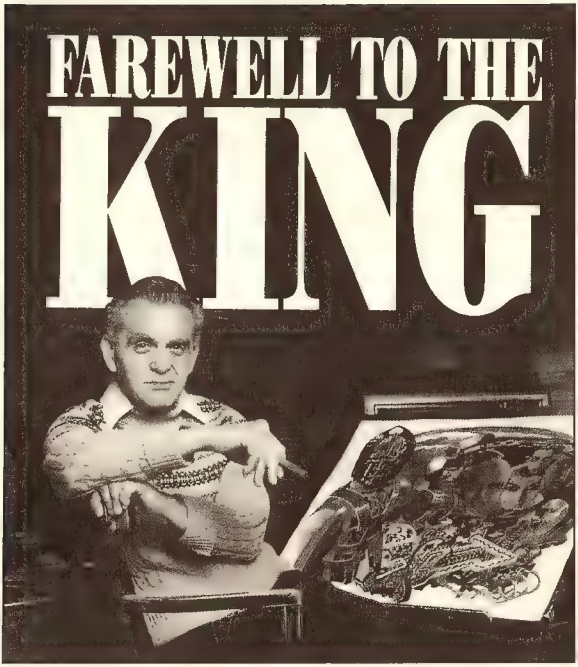


Photo: CS#2 Cover

Jack Kirby *is* the American comic book. No one before or since has affected the medium in such a vast and all-encompassing way.

The early 1960s saw the fruits of Kirby's visions realized on the pages of Marvel Comics titles like *The Fantastic Four*, *Thor* and *Captain America*.

Friends remember that King of Comics, the legendary Jack Kirby.

By WILL MURRAY

The passing of Jack "King" Kirby of heart failure on the morning of February 6, 1994 left a void in the field of comic books that will never be filled.

"Jack was one of a kind," longtime collaborator Joe Simon told COMICS SCENE. "Jack's whole life was comic books. He did a couple of brief stints at comic strips, but books were his whole life. And he was great at it."

Born August 28, 1917 on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Jacob Kurtzberg escaped the poverty of his Depression youth through drawing. While still a teenager, he turned his talents to the commercial art field, doing "in-between" animation work, newspaper cartoons and, under a variety of Anglo-Saxon pen names inspired by the tough Irish heroes of film and his neighborhood, broke into the primitive comic book field in 1940 on Victor Fox's *Blue Bolt*.

It was at Fox Comics that Jack Kirby—as he eventually styled himself—met Joe Simon. When Simon moved on to Martin Goodman's Timely Comics as an editor, Kirby followed. When Simon created Captain America (CS #11), Kirby, whose inventive layouts and dynamic forced perspective were already becoming his trademark, was the logical choice to draw the feature, with Simon and others pitching in on inks.

"Jack was the turning point in comics," notes artist Gil Kane, one of a legion of Kirby assistants who went on to make a name for himself. "When he came into comics, he represented the best of the old tradition, but he was also the vanguard of the new. Everybody's style was predicated on the traditional magazine or book illustration styles that prevailed during the first part of the century. When Jack came in, he had *all* of those elements under control, but at the same time he introduced a vitality, a force, a sense of power and a preoccupation with utilitarian shapes. He was a brilliant designer. Nobody could stand in totality against what Jack was doing on a page. He swept the entire field. Within two years, everybody was swiping from him more than anybody else."

From that point on, there was no stopping the team of Simon & Kirby.

Cashing in on the James Bond spy craze, Kirby helped to transform Nick Fury from battlefield hero to super-suave secret agent.

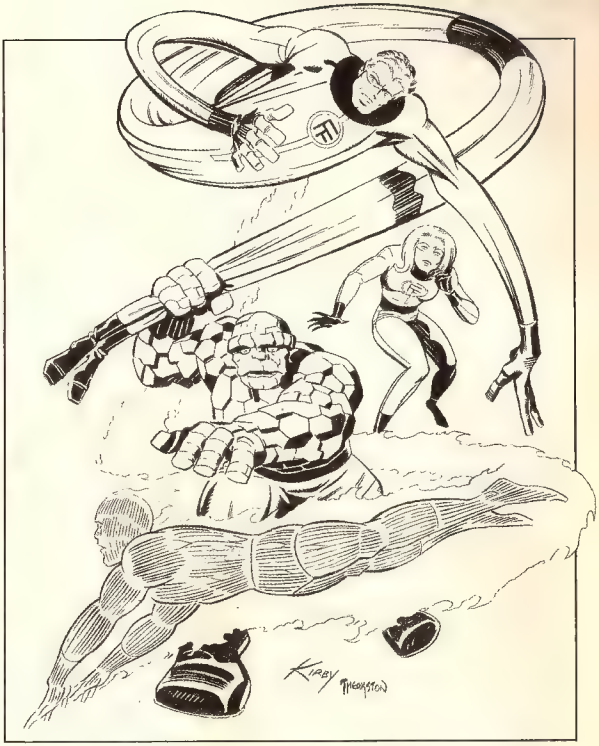
Quickly moving on to DC Comics, they launched Boy Commandos, Newsboy Legion, the Sandman and others—all comic book bestsellers. Only the necessity of pausing to fight WWII slowed their amazing creativity.

"We worked together very closely," Simon recalls. "We had great times working together. We had our studio at Tudor City, and other artists worked for us. One thing that struck me about Jack, I could give Jack a script and I could give the same script to some other really terrific artist and when Jack's art would come back, it would be alive. With the other guys, you would have to throw it out because there wasn't even a story. They couldn't tell a story the way Jack did."

Kirby blazed a brilliant trail across the first two decades of comics, developing and quickly abandoning entire pocket universes of characters. Whatever genre was hot, Kirby breathed new life into it, whether it was *Boy's Ranch*, *Young Romance*, *Black Magic*, *Justice Traps the Guilty* or Simon & Kirby's satirical answer to Captain America, *Fighting American* (CS #14).

When a more conservative quasi-advertising approach to comics art came into vogue during the post-war era, Kirby abandoned his wild expressivism and showed himself to be the equal of any of his peers with his more refined approach to *Young Romance*, a million-selling comic book genre he pioneered with Simon.

With the comics industry hitting rough times in the late 1950s, Simon & Kirby split up after launching *The Fly* and *The Double Life of Private Strong* for Archie Comics. Kirby created *Challengers of the Unknown* for DC, then drifted back to Timely, now known as Marvel Comics. Page rates were low and the only road to survival lay in high-speed production.



Without Kirby, there would have been no *Fantastic Four*, and no Marvel Universe.

Ironically, it was during this difficult period that Kirby began to come into his own.

"This time," observes Kane, "Jack put aside most of the lyricism, focused almost entirely on power and anger and came through so overwhelmingly, so pervasively, basically *nothing* stood before him. He cleared the decks of Alex Toth, Lou Fine, Reed Crandall and everybody who was there. There was only Jack, who became the *only* style."

"Jack was the essential comic artist for his time," adds Larry Lieber, who scripted the overwhelming majority of the so-called "big monster" stories that prefigured the rise of the Marvel superhero in *Strange Tales*, *Journey into Mystery* and other Stan Lee-edited comics. "He knew how to get the most

Hulk Art: Jack Kirby/Steve Ditko

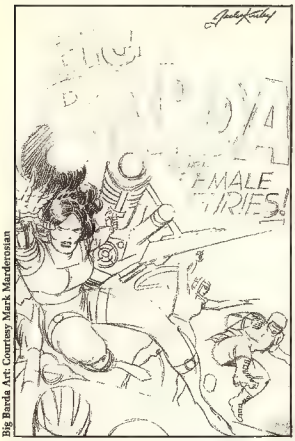
"I always suspected that Jack Kirby was really the Incredible Hulk condensed into a lovable guy by some alchemist," muses Will Eisner.

All Marvel Art: Jack Kirby

Stan Lee and Kirby collaborated on *The Fantastic Four* for more than 100 issues, but soon after, Kirby left Marvel.

out of his drawing in one picture. He got the most drama, and certainly the most action you could get with his perspective and everything. He never put in anything just because it looked pretty. It was all telling the story. If he drew a crowd of people, everyone was in a different pose. Even his rocks, he made look interesting. You *wanted* to look at them!"

It was during this period, according to Lieber, that the quintessential Kirby emerged. "As Jack was doing these monsters, particularly when he was doing Colossus, it's almost like to make him look like stone, he had to draw it in a different way. If you look at Colossus and then at his later style, they're similar. His style became strong and simplified. After a while, his people were almost becoming more like stone. I often thought that maybe it had started because of all the monsters he was doing which gave him such leeway to draw that way."



Big Barda Art: Courtesy Mark Marderosian

In the '70s, Kirby's Fourth World titles lacked the commercial punch DC wanted. He did contemplate a *Big Barda* series, doing this unpublished cover.

He was a very talented guy," agrees Dick Ayers, who inked the majority of those same monster stories, as well as the earliest Marvel superheroes. "I enjoyed his work very much when I inked it. His initial concept was always exciting, as was his design. Jack and Stan saved the industry. Stan pitted me with Jack. There was one point where I was inking him, because I wanted to do everything he turned out, it got to be like a game. I think I clocked myself at 100 inked pages a month! Jack was so dependable. The work would always come right on time. We worked very well together because we both had the same mentality."

"What can you say other than the fact that he now walks among other giants that have gone before him," muses the man who inked Kirby's classic *Fantastic Four* #5 and Thor's origin story, Joe Sinnott. "There'll just never be anyone like him. He was the greatest storyteller of all time. His characters were the greatest. I couldn't put into words my feelings toward his work.

"There were no frustrations whatsoever," Sinnott says of inking Kirby on the prime years of *The Fantastic Four*. "He was the easiest guy to work with. He gave you everything. Very little had to be added or changed. It was unbelievable the way he made it easy for anybody he was working with."

Don Heck, a favorite Kirby inker who often followed the artist on many Marvel superhero titles, recalls, "To me, it's like losing a big brother. It

Young Romance Art: Jack Kirby/Joe Simon

Kirby and Joe Simon single-handedly created the romance comic book genre with *Young Romance*.

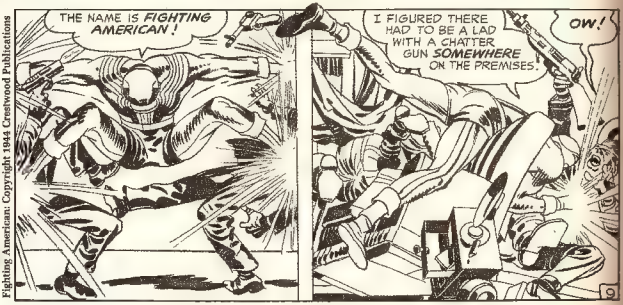
Selected Art: The Comic Book Makers by Joe Simon/Crestwood Publications Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc.

leaves an emptiness in you. I'm still shocked about it. He was something special. With somebody like that, it's like Walt Disney or one of the other giants who you figure will last forever.

"He was probably the greatest innovator I've known," Heck continues. "He could take a normal thing, expand on it and take it to the limits. There won't be anybody like him again. Both he and Stan Lee did more for comics than anybody. There's no question about that. And all the people who are making all sorts of money owe a lot to him, whether or not they realize that."

A somber Stan Lee recalls, "Of course, Jack and I had been friends and collaborators for so many years. I'm terribly sorry to hear about this. I think it's a terrible loss for the comics field. Jack was a towering talent. I think he'll be remembered for as long as people continue to read literature and legend. I'm sorry that he and I weren't closer during the last years, but it's just one of those things."

It was the Stan Lee/Jack Kirby Marvel collaborations of the 1960s that revolutionized comics, beginning with *Fantastic Four* #1 in 1961, and gave birth to what is now called



Fighting American: Copyright 1954 Crestwood Publications

The duo satirized their greatest creation with *Fighting American*, a spoof of Captain America.

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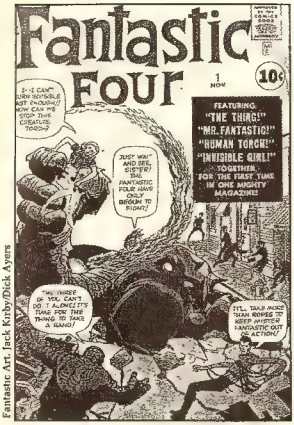
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Fantastic Art: Jack Kirby/Dick Ayers

Legendary are the creations of Jack Kirby, a man who leaves a legacy of dynamic style.

DC Comics was also favored by a wave of Kirby's magic wand during the 1970s.

the Marvel Universe. It was a chaotic, tumultuous time, with Lee editing and writing, and Kirby co-creating, co-plotting and drawing, drawing, drawing constantly—often pausing in his own work to do breakdowns for other artists to finish.

Out of it came a legion of characters who exploded across comic book pages with their first introductions and are today multi-million-dollar licensing properties known worldwide. Kirby often hopped off titles as soon as he had them rolling, but the cornerstone of the Marvel Universe remained the seminal *Fantastic Four*, which Lee & Kirby stayed with for an unprecedented 102-issue run. Billed as "The World's Greatest Comics Magazine," it was the launchpad for innumerable spin-off characters and concepts Kirby was too impatient to hold back for later development.

"He was very instrumental to my being in comics," reflects Kirby's longtime Marvel art director, fellow artist John Romita. "I still remember, I was 10 years old when I saw *Captain America* #1. Even as a kid, I realized this was something special. It was different from all the other comics I had seen. From that day on, he has never been far out of my mind. The only reason I never ended up drawing more like Jack was because I *couldn't* do it. If I had my druthers, I would have drawn more like Jack, but I couldn't formularize it like Jack.

"He influenced maybe 50 years worth of comics artists," Romita adds. "I can't calculate the influence he has had. He gave it more creative juices than anybody. His throwaway ideas were better than most people's lifetime ideas. I used to say, 'I wish I had his wastebasket ideas!' Jack told me back in '65 that I would live to see the day when comic art was going to be in museums. It was a luncheon at the Playboy Club. We laughed at him, but he was way ahead of his time."

"I wouldn't be in comics without Jack," admits John Buscema, "because I studied his stuff. I didn't have a flair for comics. So, I used his stuff. As far as I was concerned, he was a genius at comics. Before him, everyone was thought of as an illustrator. Jack opened a whole bunch of doors for everyone. You could go in many different directions. He was a superstar. He left everyone in the dust."

All Captain America, Fantastic Four, Thor, Iron Man, Hulk, SHIELD, Silver Surfer & Associated Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group

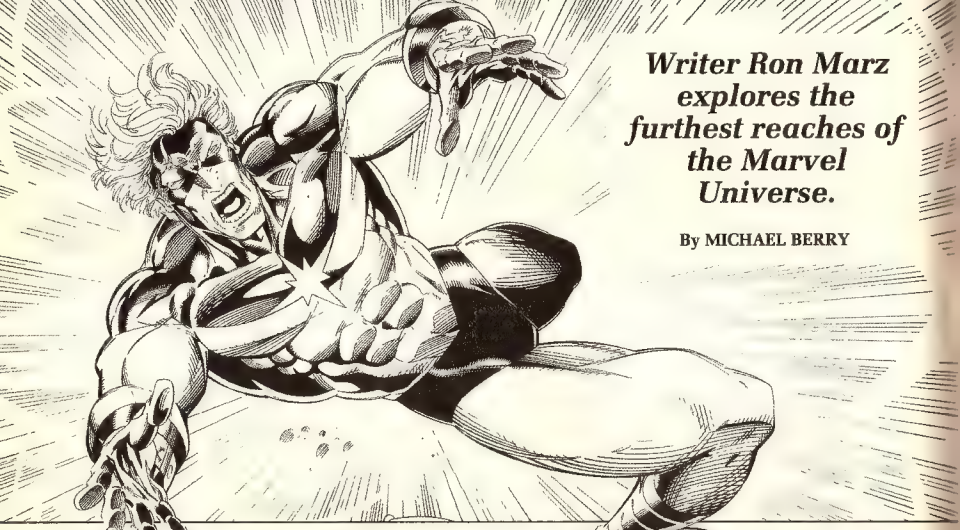
Avengers Art: Jack Kirby/Don Heck

"Jack was the essential comic artist of his time," relates Larry Lieber.

To keep the world safe from the Nazis and the Red Skull, Joe Simon & Jack Kirby gave us Captain America and Bucky.

What can you say about the guy?" former DC Comics publisher Carmine Infantino, who personally wooed the King from Marvel to DC in 1970, leading to the classic if ill-fated Fourth World books (*New Gods*, *The Forever People*, *Mr. Miracle*), asks rhetorically. "He was a very talented guy, he lived a pretty fruitful life, and he was a force in this industry. He was an important cog in this whole Machiavellian thing we call comics. Without that spoke in the wheel, it would be a very unfinished picture. I think history will bode well

(continued on page 56)



Writer Ron Marz explores the furthest reaches of the Marvel Universe.

By MICHAEL BERRY

THE COSMOS ACCORDING TO MARZ

Marvel touts him as their current "master of cosmic adventure." And based on his recent prolific output of comics writing, you might well suspect that Ron Marz does keep a few otherworldly tricks hidden up his sleeves.

The longtime scripter for *The Silver Surfer*, Marz recently revamped *Green Lantern* for DC (CS #41) while completing his tenures on *The Mighty Thor* and *Secret Defenders*. Now, he has been given an additional opportunity to exercise his creative chops on *Cosmic Powers*, Marvel's galaxy-spanning, six-issue limited series that showcases supporting players who deserve their turn in the spotlight.

Each 48-page issue of *Cosmic Powers* features not only a self-contained story but plot threads related to the titanic struggle brewing between two of the Marvel Universe's most formidable villains, Thanos and Tyrant. In addition to those headliners, the cast includes Terrax, Jack of Hearts, Ganymede, Legacy and Morg.

Marz says, "The mini-series was something I came up with [along with] Craig Anderson, who's the *Silver Surfer* editor. We wanted to give more exposure to these supporting characters, because they *do* get a fair amount of fan mail and people want to see them more often. By his nature, however, the Surfer is a loner, and we can have these characters in the monthly book only so often before Norrin Radd starts to lose that solitary aspect."

Art: Tom Grindberg

"To my mind, a cosmic book should have a great deal of visual whiz-bang to it," relates Marz.

The purpose of *Cosmic Powers* is partly to illuminate some of the players' previously unrevealed histories and psychological motivations. Marz says, "We try to portray the characters in such a light that readers can get under their skin a little bit and learn more about them. The series also allows us to tell a complete story that runs through the six issues, with the final issue culminating in that battle between Thanos and Tyrant."

Marz claims he was initially wary of the project's complexity. "But now that we've gotten into it," he says, "and Craig and I have talked about it more and more, I think it's turning out nicely. The benefit of the double page-count is that it gives us enough room to explore the characters and work in some really expansive, hopefully

shocking, visuals. To my mind, a cosmic book should have a great deal of visual whiz-bang to it. All these issues do, and they're really exciting looking."

The series' artistic line-up includes Ron Lim, inker Jimmy Palmiotti, Walter McDaniel, inker Matt Danning, Andy Smith, Tom Grindberg, Angel Medina and inker Bill Anderson.

The first issue of *Cosmic Powers* finds Thanos musing upon what has become of him since the end of *The Infinity Gauntlet*. Marz makes it sound as if Thanos is undergoing one heck of a mid-life crisis.

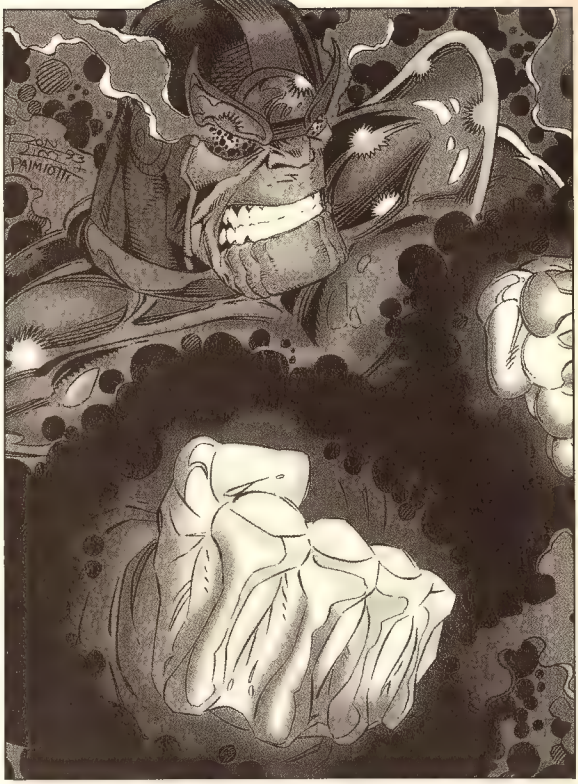
"This guy has been almost a god, one of the worst bastards in the Marvel Universe," says Marz. "Lately, though, he has been connived into helping heroes like Warlock and the Silver Surfer for the greater good of the universe. It's not a role he's comfortable with, so he's looking for a challenge. Eventually, he finds out about Tyrant and decides that Tyrant is an opponent worthy of his skills."

Terrax, a former herald of Galactus, steps into the spotlight for the second issue. Even though he carries an axe that channels his cosmic energy and gives him control over dirt, rocks and other earthly substances, Terrax gets set up to take a humiliating fall during the story. According to Marz, this bout with adversity allows the reader to see Terrax as he really is. "Once he gets screwed over," says Marz. "we watch him cut loose and do to others as they would do unto him."

At the issue's end, Thanos recruits Terrax because, as a former prisoner of Tyrant, Terrax has valuable information about Thanos' opponent. Marz says Terrax has changed a great deal since his revival in *New Warriors* years ago, when he was still bent on conquering the world. "In *Silver Surfer*, we've hopefully broadened his character so that now he isn't simply a villain but almost an anti-hero."

The third issue, starring Jack of Hearts and Ganymede, will deal primarily with Ganymede being the last of her race of warrior women. Marz says, "Much of the issue will allow us to explore where she came from, how she feels about being alone in the universe, what her relationship with Jack is like. They are two loners who have fallen together and are trying to make it as a team."

At the end of that issue, Thanos and Terrax show up and, in Marz's words, "beat the living hell out of Jack and Ganymede." The two villains kidnap Ganymede because she has the most intimate knowledge of Tyrant. His foe for centuries, she is the best source of intelligence about his strengths and weaknesses. Terrax and Thanos leave



Thanos Art: Ron Lim/Jimmy Palmiotti

"This guy has been almost a god, one of the worst bastards in the Marvel Universe," says Marz of Thanos, a major player in *Cosmic Powers*.

Design ■ Layout: Len E. Leake

Once the herald of Galactus, the Silver Surfer led the forces of justice into the fray at the beck and call of longtime *Surfer* scripter Marz.

As the son of the late Captain Marvel, Legacy must shoulder the burden of avenging his father's death.

Morg Art: Tom Grindberg

"Readers have taken a real shine to Morg," states Marz of Galactus' minion. "We're going to explore what makes him so intensely loyal to Galactus."

Jack behind, beaten and bloody.

Silver Surfer's young protégé, Legacy, returns to Titan in the fourth issue and attempts to come to grips with his heritage as the late Captain Marvel's son. Feeling the need to avenge his father's death, he thinks the only way to do so is to go after Nitro, the party responsible for the cancer that killed the Captain. Meanwhile, Jack of Hearts pulls himself together and arrives on Titan seeking assistance. Legacy ultimately decides to help him in his search for Ganymede.

The saga's penultimate volume focuses on Morg, a minion of Galactus and presently a prisoner of Tyrant. Marz says, "Readers have taken a real shine to him, so we're going to explore what makes him so intensely loyal to Galactus." Morg becomes an unwilling partner to Tyrant, with Tyrant using the cosmic energy that Galactus awarded to Morg for his own purposes.

In *Cosmic Powers*, Tyrant frees Morg to deal with Thanos, Ganymede, Terrax and other intruders. Once he has his freedom, though, Morg doesn't really care what happens to anyone else. He wants to get back to Galactus.

By the time the sixth and final book opens, Thanos has decided that he has all he needs out of his allies and goes off to do his own thing, with the intention of leaving everyone else holding the bag. "I don't want to give too much away," Marz says, "but there will be a real throwdown match between Thanos and Tyrant. We'll have to see who's left standing at the end."

Marz comes by his talent for far-flung cosmic adventures honestly. A former editor for a daily newspaper, he entered the comics industry via his friendship with Jim Starlin (CS #41), one of the acknowledged masters of that mode of storytelling.

"Jim and I have known each other going on eight or nine years now, and at one point he suggested that I should think about writing comics. 'It's a good way to put food on the table,' I think was the line. Jim took me up to Marvel and showed me around. Then, we eventually wrote some things together, so I could learn the mechanics. When Jim left *Silver Surfer*, the editors asked me to take over, and I was only too happy to oblige."

If the characters in *Cosmic Powers* rove throughout the far reaches of space, *The Silver Surfer* is taking a more down-to-Earth approach in the coming months. In his regular series, the Surfer is returning to our planet for four issues, starting with #93.

During his terrestrial visit, the Surfer will interact with the Hulk and the Fantastic Four. He'll be brought up-to-date on what has happened on Earth recently, including crucial events like Reed's absence from the Fantastic Four, the destruction of Doctor Strange's house and the Doctor's apparent death.

Marz says, "That storyline will culminate in the Surfer finding someone we don't expect buried deep

within Earth. In issues #97-100, the Surfer and that character head off into space and decide they're going to make a life together. By the time we get to #100, we'll reveal that some of what has been happening isn't as we thought it was and the Surfer will be in for the fight of his life."

Issue #93 also marks the long-awaited return of artist Ron Lim, who'll be back full-time as the regular penciller. Marz sounds relieved to know that he can depend on Lim's full attention. "Even though I've liked working with some of the fill-in artists," the writer says, "it's nice to have the guy who's really supposed to be drawing the book back and in the groove."

The Silver Surfer has been a fan favorite since his first appearance in *Fantastic Four* #48. Marz says that Norrin Radd also makes the scripter's job easier and more exciting. "Visually, the Surfer is one of the best characters out there. You can do a great deal with him. You can bring him to Earth and team him up with the Fantastic Four or send him out to the edge of the universe and have him do something completely original and off-the-wall."

After doing *Silver Surfer* for 45 issues, Marz says he knows the character inside and out. "I know what makes him tick and I can get into his head easily. Once you understand your character, it's much easier to write the book, instead of just floundering around, looking for a handle."

If Marz sounds pleased with the progress of *Silver Surfer*, he's far less enthusiastic about his tenure on *The Mighty Thor*. For a time, Marvel promised interesting things for the Thunder God, including a team-up with Beta Ray Bill and the return of Thor's evil half-brother, Loki. But you know what happens to the best laid plans of mice and Norse gods.

Who are these bringers of destruction? Look to writer Marz for the answers in his *Cosmic Powers* mini-series.

Asked about the future of *Thor*, Marz replies, "I'm gone. My last issue was #471. Truthfully, I'm not sure what's going to happen with the book. I was all set to continue with artist Tom Grindberg, but it fell apart when we couldn't decide on a direction."

According to Marz, he and Grindberg were interested in doing more mythological storylines, focused more closely within Asgard. "To me, that's where Thor works best," Marz notes, "and it's a setting you don't see anywhere else in comics. But there was some hesitancy on the part of Marvel to put him back into that landscape. We threw out some other ideas about giving Thor some business on Earth to take care of, but it just seemed that what I wanted to do and what the Powers That Be wanted to do were heading in two different directions. So, I called it quits and gave somebody else a crack at it."

Marz has also finished his duties on *Secret Defenders*. His last issues set up some of the conflicts fully exploited in *Cosmic Powers*, but also left a bundle of loose plot threads for his successor. Marz had planned to take a four or five month vacation from writing the title, but various circumstances, like the disappearance of Dr. Strange, one of the book's main players, convinced him to make a clean break.

"After issue #14," the writer says, "it's somebody else's job to pull the pieces together and decide, in the wake of Doc's departure, how the book

(continued on page 60)

Marz is exiting *Secret Defenders*. "It's more fair of me to walk away and let somebody else put their mark on it."

"It's nice to have the guy who's really supposed to be drawing the book back and in the groove," raves Marz of returning penciller Ron Lim.

Art: Ron Lim

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FUTURE FIRE

The name is familiar, but we can't quite place the face.

By DREW BITTNER

He's an armored android, containing the mind of a murdered cybernetic whiz kid. His mission? Save humanity from itself—no matter what the cost.

This is *Ghost Rider 2099*, a new Marvel future title written by Len Kaminski, with art by Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham. Much like the other *2099* series featuring new heroes with familiar names, Kaminski says that this Ghost Rider has *nothing* to do with his 1994 counterpart.

"My Ghost Rider couldn't be *less* like the current one," he says. "He's a creation of technology rather than mythology, and where the existing Ghost Rider is a mysterious, unknowable supernatural being, presumably thousands of years old, possessing ancient secrets and wisdom, motivated by some inhuman concept of vengeance, the Ghost Rider of 2099 is an impulsive, hotheaded kid. He's a *very* angry young man whose main source of motivation is a desire to strike back at the society and culture that has oppressed and marginalized him his entire life. He has been kicked around since the day he was born, and now that he has the power to do so, he's kicking back."

"He" is Kenshiro "Zero" Cochrane, whose consciousness is downloaded into an android by a collection of mysterious artificial intelligences known as the Ghostworks. Kaminski says that the Ghostworks lurk in "the mysterious underworld beneath the surface of Cyberspace...hidden from human knowledge. The Ghostworks residents have taken a good long look at human civilization in 2099, and they don't like what they see. They predict that a massive collapse is coming if certain social and cultural changes aren't made soon, and any fall that destroys human civilization will likely take the world's data network—and the Ghostworks—with it. They create the Ghost Rider, in effect, to 'debug' human culture before it crashes."

The world surrounding Ghost Rider will want to make him into a hero, but this character refuses to fit that mold.

Ghost Rider's home and base of operations is a multi-level freeway known as Transverse City, stretching between Chicago and Detroit. Kaminski describes a city that makes the megalopolis of *Blade Runner* seem a tourist paradise by comparison.

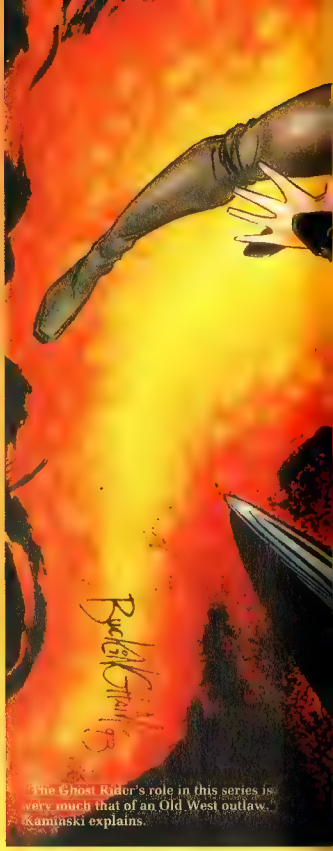
"Transverse City is a heaving sprawl of concrete and steel that started out as the beginning of an ambitious transcontinental superhighway—10 stories of 20-lane traffic—that only got as far as connecting Chicago and Detroit before the whole project was abandoned. It became an ecological niche to be filled. The bottom levels no longer serve traffic; they're several-hundred-mile stretches of ramshackle buildings housing the area's permanent underclass: Calcutta under concrete. The upper levels are still functional highways, linking the toxic manufacturing zone which Detroit became and the cultural and economic center of Chicago. To either side of the superhighway, a forest of haphazard buildings, shops and what-have-you has grown up over the years, the way things like that usually do. It's a much more dystopian setting than we've seen in most of the 2099 books."

All Art: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group

Kaminski can't believe his good fortune: Not only does he have a terrific art team, but he gets a "big chunk of North America to play with."

Ghost Rider, meanwhile, will become an urban legend in this bleak underscape, taking on a heroic/villainous role as he begins his war against the status quo. Described as an "Old West/cyberpunk/action" series, Kaminski agrees that *Ghost Rider 2099* does feature that unique blend of genres.

"Actually, that's a pretty fair description," he says. "The Ghost Rider's role in this series is very much that of an Old West outlaw like Jesse James or Billy the Kid, individuals who were considered heinous criminals by the authorities and ruling classes of their day. Yet, they were often seen as heroes by the lower classes because their targets were the same ruling classes—the banks, the railroads—who the common people perceived as their oppressors. So, whether someone sees the Ghost Rider as an anti-hero or



"The Ghost Rider's role in this series is very much that of an Old West outlaw," Kaminski explains.

Public Enemy #1 is going to have a lot to do with that person's place in the food chain.

"Of course, all this is going to be complicated as the series progresses," Kaminski notes, "because people will start wanting to force the Ghost Rider into the role they've conceived for him, and he won't cooperate. He couldn't care less for ideology or economic class warfare as such; he doesn't see himself as some kind of role model or inspirational figure like Captain America. He's not acting from ideals, he's acting from righteous indignation. There's a line Greil Marcus once wrote to describe the Sex Pistols: 'They were a carefully constructed proof that the whole of received hegemonic propositions about the way the world was supposed to work comprised a fraud so complete and venal that it demanded to be destroyed beyond the powers of memory to recall its existence.' That's what this Ghost Rider is all about. This

culture sucks; tear it down and build something clean—the building part being someone else's job, of course."

Kaminski says that the Old West analogy was hardly an accident. Having studied the way Earth 2099 is set up, with overwhelming megacorporations exercising god-like control over the planet's population, the Old West suggested itself.

"The analogy works very well for the 2099 setting," the writer says. "In both cases, the majority of economic power is in the hands of a very few individuals who frequently couldn't care less about the impact their actions have. In the 1800s, it was the early capitalist robber-barons; in 2099, it's the massive trans-national corporations like Alchemax, Stark-Fujikawa and my own particular contribution, D/Monix. These corporations control enormous amounts of power, both economic and cultural, exercising a frightening amount of influence not only over what the average person does but—through manipulation of the dissemination of information through the media—what the average person thinks. And they're very, very successful at it, to the point where the only people who can really see through it all are the ones at the bottom of the ladder, who see for themselves that it's all *lies*."

As he fights the good fight, Ghost Rider naturally acquires a handful of friends and legions of enemies. Kaminski says that, while Old West mythology provides much of the foundation for this title, the other half of the book is hardcore cyberpunk—with a cast that reflects this cutting-edge subgenre of SF.

"*GR 2099*'s supporting cast will include people from all the various levels of Transverse City society, from Kenshiro Cochrane's former girl friend Kylie Gagarin, a tough, streetwise woman from the wrong side of the meridian, to Willis Adams, a famous video-news personality who becomes obsessed with finding out the true story behind the Ghost Rider; he ends up getting a real education in the truth about the way his society is really run. Then, there's Anesthesia Jones, mysterious owner of the local dive, the Bar Code. She's said to have had a bloody past as a government dirty-tricks and network operative for the 2099 descendant of the CIA. And there's Jimmy Alhazared, a.k.a. 'Dr. Neon,' a 15-year-old computer hacking genius whose ambition is to be the greatest Cyberspace jockey in town, provided he can pick up the street smarts to live long enough. Plus an assortment of hustlers, lowlifes, hackers and the like.

"The bad guys start with D/Monix," Kaminski continues, "a voracious trans-national corporation whose ambition is to establish sole control over the distribution and processing of in-

Design & Layout: Lan H. Leake

All Art: Chris Bachalo & Mark Buckingham

"Great change in society comes from the fringe," Kaminski says, "which is where Ghost Rider comes in."

formation itself. Unlike, say, Alchemax, D/Monix isn't interested in property or tangible goods themselves; they see control of all that as irrelevant when you have mastery over what goes into people's heads to begin with. D/Monix wants to write *your* operating software. They, and their various agents, will be recurring villains, since Transverse City is their own private little arena for testing out their theories of social engineering.

"Aside from D/Monix, there'll be L-Cipher, a renegade intellect from the Ghostworks, who sees humans much as we view apes –an intermediary evolutionary step from which interesting experimental data can be extracted; Hardwolf, Zero Cochrane's former best friend, who has been turned into a homicidal cyborg marauder and brainwashed into unrelenting hatred for Cochrane by D/Monix; the Bloodsport Club, a very exclusive society of Transverse City's upper-crust elites, whose private hobby is to neurally jack into cybernetically and genetically enhanced predators modeled after mythological creatures—griffins, chimeras, basilisks, etc.—and then roam about preying upon the underclass; and finally, the Bringers of Judgment, a fanatical religious sect who are just darned tired of waiting for God to declare Judgment Day. By their figuring, He's 99 years late already. Their plan is to bring about the End of the World and get it over with."

Ghost Rider 2099 is about resistance to the way things are—and joining the fight to make things better. "Great change in society comes from the fringes," Kaminski explains, "from the outlaws, criminals and underground artists, which is where Ghost Rider comes in. His very existence—demonstrating that the forces of control and domination can be opposed—spreads the idea of resistance. He's a vector for an information virus, a carrier of the 'meme' that says, 'We don't have to take this; we can refuse and resist.'

"The initial plotlines have to deal with the Ghost Rider's origin, and a variety of ramifications his creation will have on Transverse City and the rest of our cast," he says. "And that's all I'm tellin'..."

Down the road, Kaminski expects the other 2099 heroes and villains to show up in his book, and for Ghost Rider to appear elsewhere, but adds that nothing definite has been decided.

"We'll see some guest appearances once the other 2099 creative teams become familiar with the character. For my part, I plan to make use of the existing 2099 background and characters, including the 'star' characters, where they're appropriate and logical. We'll probably see Spider-Man 2099 some time during the first year or so, in keeping with the long-standing tradition of similar Spider-Man guest shots within the present-day Marvel books."

"The Ghost Rider of 2099 is an impulsive, hotheaded kid," notes Kaminski. "He's a *very* angry young man."

Ghost Rider 2099 is unique, in that it is the only 2099 title not edited by group editor Joey Cavalieri. "It's sort of complicated, but the Ghost Rider books all fall under Bobbie Chase's umbrella," Kaminski says. "Evan Skolnick is the book's official editor, and he has to go through channels to coordinate things with Joey's office, which I think slows the process down a bit. We haven't really had any problems, but if we do crossovers and get some deadline pressures, that would be when we would have problems to overcome. I've spoken to Joey, to make sure that my ideas don't interfere with any of his concepts, and there has been no trouble at all so far."

Kaminski adds that, creatively, he has been greatly enjoying *Ghost Rider 2099*. "Obviously, the setting is very different from the present-day Marvel Universe. I've found working in 2099 to be very liberating creatively, in that I only have a few other books—all of which are only a year or so old—that I need to keep consistent with, instead of dozens of titles and 30 years of continuity to worry about. Not to mention being freed from staying faithful to real world situations. I've got a big chunk of North America to play with! It's mine, all mine! Mu-ha-hahahahahaha! In case you hadn't figured it out yet, I'm having fun."

The art team of Bachalo, known for

his work on DC's *Death: The High Cost of Living*, and Buckingham, with letterer Richard Starkings and colorist Christie Scheele, are a combination that staggers Kaminski with the weight of his good fortune.

"I couldn't possibly be happier," he says. "I've admired Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham's work for ages and I never dreamed that I would be lucky enough to work with them myself. Richard and Christie are just aces as well. When Evan showed me last year's *Ghost Rider Annual*, done by Chris, Mark, Richard and Christie, and said this is the *GR99* art team, I squealed like a game-show contestant on nitrous oxide. A shameful display, really, and I would do it again in a second."

The artistic style, as well as the dramatic departure from the earlier hero's motif, should prevent readers from suffering any confusion between his Ghost Rider and the blazing skull of today.

"Having seen the art for issue #1, and therefore what the 2099 Ghost Rider is going to look like, I really, *really* don't think there's going to be much confusion between the two [Riders]. And I think, I hope, that what we're doing in *GR99* is so far afield from the present-day Ghost Rider that the audience will see it as being entirely its own animal, to be judged on its own merits. And personally, I would just as soon keep them out of each other's way."

With the enthusiasm over starting *Ghost Rider 2099* and *War Machine* (written with Scott M. Benson, CS #41) to keep him going, Kaminski hasn't taken much time to grieve over his short two-issue run on *Sensational She-Hulk*.

"Yeah, we had a good year-and-a-half of stories we had pitched to [former editor] Renée Witterstaetter," he says fondly. "The one we pitched for #61 had Jennifer encountering a gang of Elvises. They turn out to be Skrulls who landed on Earth way back and got stuck as Elvis—so all these Elvis sightings in the tabloids are explained. And then it gets weird. Since Renée left Marvel [to work for Topps Comics], there really hasn't been anyone there who champions the humorous books quite the same way, so *She-Hulk*'s in limbo for awhile."

However, he says that he and his partner are very happy to be working with Witterstaetter again in her new capacity at Topps; they're doing a three-issue spin-off from Jack Kirby's *Satan's Six* series featuring a character previously known as Frightful. According to Benson, that isn't really his name, it's more of a title.

"Jim Salicrup was casting around for a name and thought Hellspawn sounded best," Benson says. "From what I heard, he contacted Todd [*Spawn*] McFarlane and worked out an arrangement to use that name—I think it may involve a credit saying 'Used courtesy of Todd McFarlane' or something like that."

"I want to say how happy I am to continue working with Renée," Kaminski adds. "She's terrific."

Other future projects include *Midnight Man* for Topps. "This is a more serious supernatural-oriented book centered around a being who mediates between the worlds of the dead and living," he says. "It'll be closer to my work on *Hellstorm* than anything else. Plus, I'm doing *Iron Man* and *War Machine* for Marvel. I've spoken with Joey Cavalieri about some projects for *2099 Unlimited*, right now centering on Ghost Rider and his friends."

However...

"There are some very tentative plans for a character who *might* become Iron Man 2099, but I would want to do something entirely new and original with that sort of character. Joey and I agree very much on one point, which is that the 2099 Universe should now start developing *original* characters," he declares. "We might have needed 'revamped' characters to build our foundation, but we should be ready to move beyond that stage now. There's lots of potential in the 2099 world that hasn't been explored yet; I'm delving deep into its cyberpunk aspects, which have hardly been explored, and that's just one thing that can be done.

"Beyond that—well, I have a few other things in the works," says Len Kaminski, "but nothing I can really talk about right now. I don't want to jinx anything."

EXTREME SETTINGS

Exploring their part of the Image Universe, Extreme Studios takes on a crossover.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Rob Liefeld's studio prides itself on going to the extreme every month, and writer Eric Stephenson is excited at the prospect of guiding them through their most ambitious crossover yet.

Rather than valiantly attempting another inter-company crossover, or working with all of the founding Image creators, Stephenson is weaving most of the characters Liefeld has created for his own Extreme Studios into a seven-part saga. The story involves *Team Youngblood #7 & #8*, *Brigade #8 & #9*, *Bloodstrike #9 & #10* and *Supreme #11*, with a special epilogue in *Supreme #12*.

"This is basically *one* story that flows through four different titles," says Stephenson. "It starts in *Team Youngblood #7* and concludes in *Bloodstrike #10*. It's one story that ends up snowballing over the course of all seven issues, pulling at all of these characters, and they're affected by all of the story's events."

Unlike many ambitious crossovers that actually leave the characters unchanged, Stephenson promises that this multi-part tale will have a significant effect on the Extreme corner of the Image Universe as it introduces new heroes and a major new villain.

"*Extreme Prejudice* is going to establish a number of things," he says. "It's going to establish a key villain called Quantum. Twenty years ago, he was one of the most powerful threats ever to walk the Earth. We're bringing him back after he has spent years in captivity. Following the crossover, he'll be turning up again and again as a major antagonist for Team Youngblood, Youngblood and the Newmen.

"The Newmen are another result of the crossover," he reveals. "They're going to get their own series and become a major part of our niche in the Image Universe. The Newmen are a group of young people who possess a special gene called the Nu Gene. This Nu Gene gives them abilities that ordinary people do not have."

There's a new graphic saga to take the comics world by storm—*Extreme Prejudice*—the first Image/Extreme Studios crossover.

At its introduction, the Newmen are made up of the telepathic Reign, a flying character called Byrd, the large bear-like Kodiak, super-fast Dash and a character called Exit, who has the ability to teleport.

"When Quantum was originally a threat and creating problems for people, one of the earliest incarnations of Youngblood and the original team of Newmen defeated him," Stephenson says. "When Quantum returns, one of the original Newmen, Proctor, goes out and finds other Nu Gene-positive people to be on this new team, in some instances children of the original Newmen. Through five issues of *Extreme Prejudice*, we'll see the team forming, and they will be a key part of the crossover's conclusion. From there, they'll spin off into their own book!"

According to Stephenson, the upcoming *Newmen* series won't be a typical Image title. "The series is going to be a little bit different from what you've seen from Extreme and Image before," he says. "It'll be a little lighter in nature. They're not going to be a covert government-sponsored super-team, they're 17- to 26-

Art: Chap Yaep/Dan Panosian

All Team Youngblood, Brigade, Supreme, Bloodstrike & Associated Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Extreme Studios Art: Jeff Matsuda/Dan Panosian

Art: Marat Mychaels/Art: Art Thibert

Writer Eric Stephenson can't take all the credit for the crossover. "Rob Liefeld came up with the general idea and the thrust for the story."

which should give the series a lot of room to breathe and grow. When you start out with a group of guys who are great at what they do and go out and beat the bad guy every time, it restricts what you can do with the characters. These guys have to deal with larger-than-life threats, and we're going to look at how that affects them, and how they grow and mature over the series. It's going to have plenty of humor, subtle storytelling and action. It'll be a breath of fresh air to those people who expect *only* a certain kind of comic book from Image."

Art: Brian Murray/Christopher Ivy

"It's going to establish a key villain named Quantum," says Stephenson of the crossover. After 20 years in captivity, he's back, and he's annoyed.

The first several issues of *Newmen* are being written, with several new villains to challenge the offbeat team.

"In the first issue, they're fighting a character called Elemental," Stephenson says. "He's looking for something around the University of Washington; we're going to reveal what he's looking for later. They get involved with him by accident, and after they've taken care of him, the next few issues will find them fighting a bounty hunter called Girth. We look at the first issue as our introductory issue, featuring the guys fighting Elemental, and the second two issues take place at a carnival, fighting a big, huge guy there. Then, we have many things planned using the Seattle area, and its mountains and other landmarks."

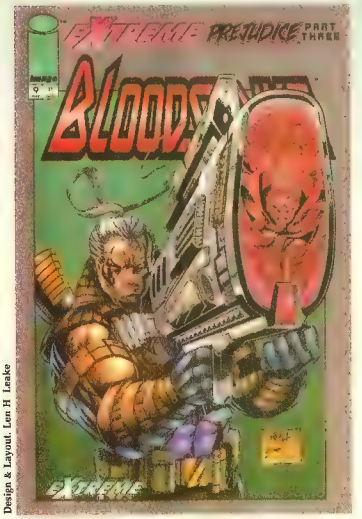
Even though the group is a Liefeld creation, Stephenson believes it isn't what many will expect. "The Newmen were created by Rob, but I don't think they're what people would think of as a Rob Liefeld team," he says. "None of the guys have guns, or any of the typical accouterments that people usually associate with Rob's characters—these are all very different-looking from anybody Rob has created before. I personally find that very exciting. It's neat because the critics have pigeonholed Rob as doing particular types of characters—these are five characters who are *not* like that. It's an interesting aspect."

More big changes are in store for a couple of established heroes during *Extreme Prejudice*, with one losing his powers and another one dying. "In both cases, these aren't minor characters," Stephenson declares. "These are *major* characters, heavyweights in our corner of the Image Universe. The one who loses his powers *won't* be getting them back, and the character who dies will *stay* dead. These are going to be profound changes that will alter the direction of their respective titles for quite a while!"

Stephenson says the hero in question is being killed because that's the direction he or she has been heading all along. "With this particular character, it's part of a natural evolution of where we wanted to go with him anyway," he says. "It's going to make sense when he or she dies. It's not going to be something that's necessarily surprising—I think people will say, 'Oh, I can see that!' It's something that has sort of been planned. We intended to do this prior to the crossover, but it's something that enriches the crossover as a whole."

Studio head Liefeld was the impetus for the entire *Extreme Prejudice* storyline, according to Stephenson. "Rob came up with the general idea and the thrust for the story, handed it over to me and said, 'This is where I want to go with this, these are the characters I want to use, I want you to sit down and write up a plot.' So, I worked up a plot for the crossover and we talked over the fine points, and passed out the final plots to the book's different creative teams. With the exception of *Supreme*, they'll all be coming back to me to script."

year-old kids brought together by Proctor. They aren't experienced at what they do—they're going to make mistakes, they're insecure and they aren't going to mesh as a team at first,



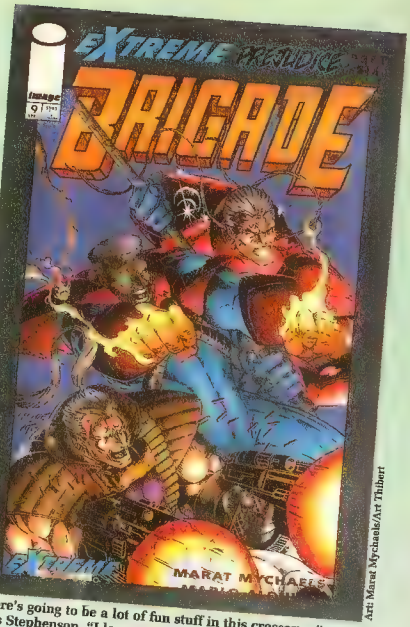
Design & Layout: Len H. Leake

There's no such thing as a gun that's *too* big.

Part of the crossover will involve the characters' past histories. "That's one of the things I found really nice about this," he says. "It gives us a chance to bring many of the characters' pasts into the forefront. We're going to be dealing with Battlestone, who is undead and has been re-animated—we're going to learn who killed him and about when he was actually still alive. By doing that, we'll get more insight on another of the book's characters. We'll also be dealing with the fact that Chapel is now on the Bloodstrike team, and his involvement will bring him into contact with characters in *Team Youngblood* and *Brigade*, where he has personal conflicts based on past experiences. Also, through Quantum's return, we'll be finding out a lot of stuff about Cabbot and Battlestone, who, we reveal early on, are his children."

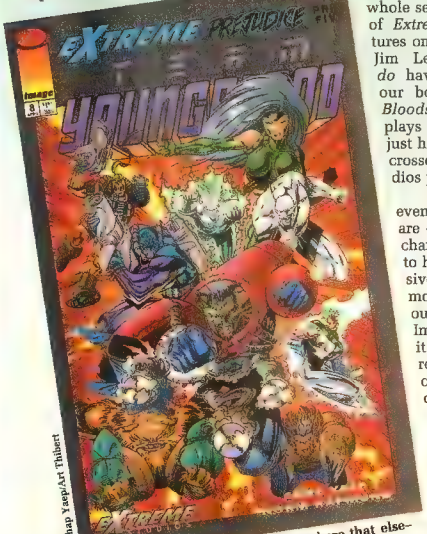
Everyone in the Extreme corner of Image will be participating in this crossover, except for *Prophet* and the *Youngblood* home team with Shaft and Badrock. Stephenson notes that although there was no fan outcry for a multi-part crossover, there was a good response to the *Blood Brothers* crossover between *Brigade* and *Bloodstrike* last year. "We were looking for something that would unify all of our titles for this summer," he says. "We laid the groundwork for this in the *Blood Brothers* crossover, and we wanted to go back in and pick up that momentum and do something equally exciting for our readers."

Continuity within Extreme and the other Image studios is tightening up, but Stephenson says the various characters from different studios within Image will still be interacting. "I don't think it's a conscious decision by anyone on our part at Extreme," he says. "It's just much easier to do crossovers within our own group of characters than to go out and draw in a bunch of the other Image guys. I think the same could be said for Marvel—when the X-Men do a crossover, it's usually among the other X-titles. The studio system at Image is like the Superman office at DC or the Spider-Man office at Marvel—each of us covers a different niche of the universe. There is a whole sequence in the first issue of *Extreme Prejudice* that features one of the characters from Jim Lee's *Storm-watch*. We *do* have interaction between our books. In an upcoming *Bloodstrike*, Spawn actually plays a pretty large part. We just haven't opted to do major crossovers with the other studios just yet."



Art: Marat Mychaels/Art Thibert

"There's going to be a lot of fun stuff in this crossover," raves Stephenson. "I love putting these characters together and watching them bounce off each other."



Art: Chap Yasp/Art Thibert

There's no villain on Earth–or anywhere that else–can withstand the combined assault of Team Youngblood.

Even though the events in *Extreme Prejudice* are confined to the Extreme characters, it's all intended to help build a better, cohesive Image Universe. "The more unified we can make our particular end of the Image Universe, the easier it will be to fit in with the rest of the Universe, because we will be more defined," he says.

Stephenson is confident that deadline and late shipping problems which have plagued Image titles in the past will *not* affect the crossover books.

"That's becoming a non-issue from my point of view," he says. "Anyone who takes a glance at what has been coming out from us at the comic stores will see that we've really gotten back into getting the stuff out on a regular basis. All of the *Extreme Prejudice* books are in production right now, and the books will be done long before they're scheduled to ship. That's a pretty normal policy for every other company in the business—it has just taken a little while to get over our growing pains and get into the swing of getting things done."

For Stephenson, the most exciting aspect of *Extreme Prejudice* has been watching all of the characters interact. "I remember when we first started talking about it, I was thinking, 'I'm really not that excited about getting a bunch of people together and having them involved in a big fight.' For me, that has never been the interesting thing about comics," he says.

"There's going to be a lot of fun stuff in this crossover. It's fun to have a character like Chapel dealing with the others. Supreme thinks he's the end-all be-all of superheroes, but he's surrounded by a bunch of people who are in the same league as him, and he reacts to all of their personalities," says Eric Stephenson excitedly. "I love putting these characters together and watching them bounce off each other!"

GET A GRIP

Beau Smith introduces a new legion of super-powered, uhh, mutants.

By MICHAEL BERRY

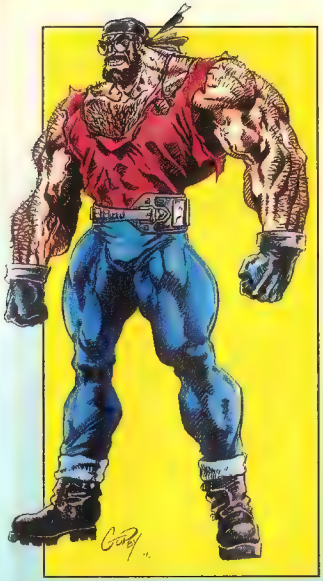
They share a secret heritage whose full implications are still unknown. They possess an awesome range of superpowers that can be used for great good or terrible ill. Their opposing factions are led by men whose abilities are shrouded in mystery and border on the supernatural.

What are they? X-Men? New Mutants? Teen Titans? Freex?

Nope, they're The G.R.I.P.—Genetically Rearranged Individual Patterns, the latest competing team in the never-ending superhero sweepstakes. They're the brainchildren of Beau Smith, writer of DC's *Warrior* and *Scout* and *The Black Terror* from Eclipse Comics. This odd assortment of characters represents Eclipse's renewed effort at appealing to the comics mainstream. Brad Gorby, whose credits include Smith's *Parts Unknown* (CS #28) and *Fem Force*, will be handling the art chores.

A continuing saga of science gone awry, *The G.R.I.P.* has its origins in a series of clandestine drug trials conducted in the '50s through the '70s by genius geneticist Dr. Marcus Foster. Using an experimental drug called

Beau Smith provides comics' newest team: *G.R.I.P.* including (clockwise from the top) Mr. Sirius, Lummox, Trackher, Bruizer, Hammerjack and The Heat.



"Even though young people are more sophisticated than I was when I was young, boys still want to be able to kick somebody's butt," notes Smith.

Cureflux, he treated terminally ill children throughout the world. In saving their lives, Cureflux also bestowed on them certain apparently beneficial side effects, including increased strength, agility, intelligence and immunity to disease and bodily harm.

Decades later, Foster learns the true legacy of his unauthorized inoculations when he reads a news item about a strange serial killer. Foster recognizes the murderer's name and hometown and realizes that he treated the killer with Cureflux as a boy.

Seeking an explanation for the atrocities, Foster arranges a meeting with the man. The murderer tells him that he, Dr. Foster, is responsible for the killings. He was supposed to have died as a child, but Foster's intervention caused him to live out a life spent trying to control the evil coiled within him. Before Foster's horrified eyes, the killer metamorphoses into a monster with razor-sharp talons. The guards gun him down to save Foster.

As Smith puts it, "This totally screws up Dr. Foster's head." The good doctor realizes that his medical meddling may have caused hundreds of thousands of deaths. To make matters even worse, when he returns to his lab, he finds it ransacked, his partial notes on Cureflux stolen. Taking the only full copy of the formula, Foster travels across the country, searching for a place where he'll be safe from those who would exploit his technology.

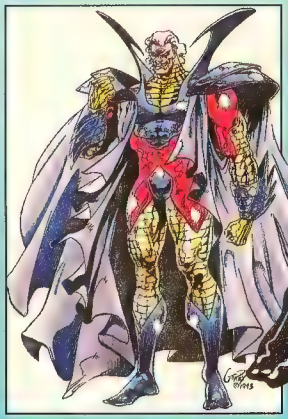
Smith says that this scenario offers "classic conflict, the classic chase." He explains, "It has all the ingredients that have made winners out of *The X-Men*, *The Fugitive* and any number of soap operas. The thing we're going to focus on is the characters' personal lives, how this Cureflux has affected them from their childhood through adulthood."

Two groups are bent on finding the missing Dr. Foster. Those who seek him for the benefit of humankind are led by the mysterious Mr. Sirius. The son of an African tribal leader, Sirius boasts a bewildering array of abilities, from invisibility to colossal strength, but no one knows their true extent. He's also able to locate others who carry DNA altered by Cureflux and gathers around him a team of super-talented individuals. They include:

Lummox. By far the most physically powerful of the group, Lummox possesses a photographic memory, able to remember virtually anything he has ever read or experienced. He carries a large, specially designed bat as a weapon. Not the kind of guy who can walk around without being noticed, he prefers to stay home and write children's books under a pen name.

Maximum Jack. Inventor extraordinaire, he provides the team with weapons and hi-tech machinery. He creates these devices with the aid of special body fluids that bend matter to his will.

The Heat. The youngest of the



Leading the Dark Horde is Dominance who plans to conquer humanity with his team of genetically-altered super-humans.

Silhouette, a *G.R.I.P.* teammate, can blend into the background until she's looked at directly.

group, he's a bold, brash guy who sees himself as a modern-day swashbuckler. Physically agile and possessing keen night vision, The Heat produces plasma blasts from his body. The blasts are channeled through twin guns custom-made by Maximum Jack.

Trackher. A former state forest ranger, she's a kind of human bloodhound, able to survey a crime scene, focus out all of the distraction and visualize key details about the perpetrator and the victims. Trained in weapons and hand-to-hand, she's the most relentless team member, the one who refuses to give up no matter what her enemies put in her way.

Bruiser. He feels no physical pain short of decapitation or dismemberment and allows himself only five minutes of sleep per day. If Bruiser doesn't keep in constant physical motion, his hyperkinetic body will shut itself down, perhaps resulting in a coma. Very chauvinistic and politically conservative, he sees himself as a John Wayne, die-hard kind of guy. To others, he's the ultimate fraternity boy on steroids.

Hammerjack. With adrenal glands that give him supernormal strength, he also exudes fumes that lend him a layer of invulnerability. A former head of security for major corporations and an expert on human anatomy, he knows exactly where to land a punch for maximum effect.

Decoy. A policewoman used to working alone, she looks "cute as a button" but transforms into a big, mean; fanged being when she gets her suspects alone.

Bearcat. Strong as a bear, quick as a cat, he's the oldest of the bunch. Thanks to his military background, he has outstanding leadership ability.

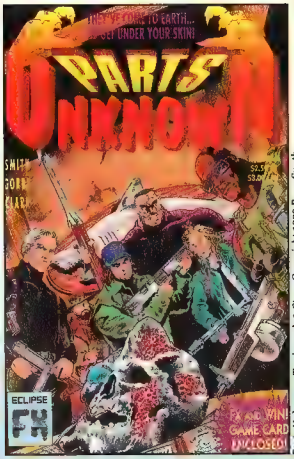
Hardball. A former pro baseball player who retired because he felt he was cheating "normal" opponents, he can throw objects with uncanny accuracy. Hardball hurls special metal balls carried on his belt.

Silhouette. She possesses camouflage powers, blending into the background until one looks directly at her.

At the opposite end of the moral spectrum from Mr. Sirius and his colleagues stands Dominance. His plan is to build an army of super-humans and conquer humanity. Not only is he recruiting other members from Dr. Foster's original test subjects, he's using the stolen Cureflux notes to augment the talents of various common criminals, employing his mind-control powers to keep these thugs in line.

Dominance feels a special loyalty to his dim-witted, Neanderthal-like assistant, Lowbrow, because Lowbrow broke him out of an oppressive orphanage when they were both kids. Now Lowbrow serves as Dominance's bodyguard and confidant.

He refers to his anti-social allies as the Dark Horde. Beautiful, bewitching Bedevil uses her powers of persuasion to force others to do her dirty work. Facade is a human chameleon, able to assume anyone's face and shape.



Parts Unknown: Trademark & Story Copyright 1993 Beau Smith
Parts Art: By & Copyright 1993 Brad Gorby & Bob Dvorak

Smith still provides *Parts Unknown* for Eclipse.

The G.R.I.P. & Related Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1993 Beau Smith All G.R.I.P. Art: By & Copyright 1993 CB Gorby

"I don't think the personal lives of superheroes have been dug into deep enough," says Smith. "That's really the slant on this book."

Described as "The Punisher gone bad," Spearhead uses his knowledge of military strategy to marshal Dominance's forces. Schizo is a dangerous sociopath who needs to be watched constantly by his cohorts, lest he suddenly decide in the middle of a battle to call the police.

Dominance's minions also include Flatline, who can be killed and resurrected any number of times; The Grill, who inflicts terrible burns with his hands; and Trample, a massive, slow and unstoppable being with a tough hide.

The G.R.I.P. was originally conceived as a mini-series, but the number of characters and the storyline's complexity demanded the broader canvas of an ongoing monthly series. That begs the question, however, of how this title will differ from the endless host of other super-team titles crowding comics racks.

"I don't think the personal lives of superheroes have been dug into deep enough," Smith observes. "That's really the slant on this book. People may say, 'Yeah, it's just another bunch of superheroes. Yeah, I've heard of those powers before,' but I really want to get into what it would be like to be a terminally ill child, have your life saved and then, as you grow older and gain powers, wonder if it *should* have been."

Although there will be plenty of audience-pleasing action, the focus of *The G.R.I.P.* will be on characterization. "I hope this will be the kind of book people will pick up and say, 'Hey, I know someone like that,' or 'I've felt that way,' rather than 'Look at that cool explosion!' "

Smith, of course, hopes that *The G.R.I.P.* will appeal equally to younger and older readers, as well as to both male and female fans. He acknowledges, however, that the book will tap into the wish-fulfillment fantasies that have made superheroes popular since the '30s.

He says, "Even though young people are more sophisticated now than I was when I was young, boys still want to be able to kick somebody's butt, stay out of trouble and get the girl at the same time. The base of our audience is still those eight-to-17-year-olds."

Lately, Eclipse hasn't been a strong contender in the superhero game, concentrating instead on producing trading card sets and offbeat, less mainstream projects like *David Chelsea in Love*. Smith says that, due to differences in editorial opinion, the company has lost some of its focus since its heyday in the mid-80s. "Back then, we finished either third or fourth [in comics publisher rankings]. As the editorial direction got more diluted, our market share slipped and slipped. Our goal in '94 is to start back up the path to where we can grab ahold of the fifth through third places."

Design & Layout: Jon H. Lucas

Warrior Trademark & Copyright 1994 DC Comics/Art: Mitch Byrd/Dan Davis

Another project Smith is working on is the revamped Guy Gardner book, *Warrior*.

According to Smith, Eclipse has several surprises prepared in the effort to achieve that goal. "We have a lot of stuff planned for Miracle Man, The Black Terror and Airboy, who'll be back as *Aviator X*."

Although nobody is giving out any details yet, Smith hints that something along the lines of a major crossover series is in the works. All he'll say is, "Much of the stuff in the Eclipse Universe will be tied into a nice, neat package at the year's end."

In the past, the momentum of certain Eclipse titles has been hampered by publishing delays. Smith swears that won't happen with *The G.R.I.P.* "Every book that I've ever worked on at Eclipse has come out on time," he maintains. "There will be no problem with that."

For his part, Smith belongs to a hard-nosed tradition of storytelling. "A lot of the stuff I've done in comics has been tough-guy stuff," he says. "My outside influences were filmmakers like John Ford and Walter Hill. Besides my father, John Wayne has to be my major influence in life. His philosophy comes from the old school that if you sign up for the job, you do it the best you can. No whining, no regrets."

Like many comics creators, Smith cites Stan Lee's addition of psychological complexity to the Marvel Comics of

(continued on page 62)

DARK SPAWNINGS

With capes flowing, Spawn & Batman meet—courtesy Todd McFarlane & friends.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

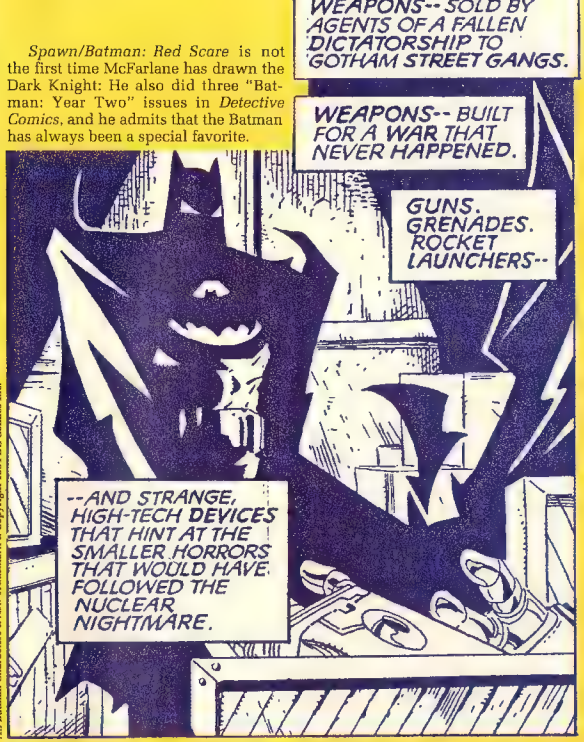
Many readers and retailers are calling it the comics event of the year. Both Image and DC are producing their own one-shot comics featuring a team-up of two of their bestselling characters. Todd McFarlane is loaning his own Spawn to DC, in exchange for the chance to borrow Batman.

Even if the *Spawn/Batman* book *Red Scare* doesn't break sales records, however, McFarlane says he and writer Frank Miller are having too much fun to care.

"Frank's enthusiasm for the project surprised me," says McFarlane. "Essentially, he doesn't own Batman or Spawn, so he was doing it as a labor of love as much as anything else. But, he really seems to be enjoying himself—not necessarily because he likes Spawn that much, but because he gets to go back to Batman again, and he's like a little kid. During the last week, we've been talking once, twice, maybe three times a day. Frank has written some funny stuff—there are a couple of pages with Alfred that are nice and light with good 'in' jokes."

When McFarlane first came up with the idea of an inter-company crossover for Spawn, Batman was at the top of a very short list. "Given that I was eventually going to cross over with somebody, why not pick a character that everybody knows and cares about?" he asks. "That was my way of thinking. Image did the Valiant *Deathmate* crossover, but I thought, 'If I'm going to cross over, I want to cross over with somebody that my mother knows.' "

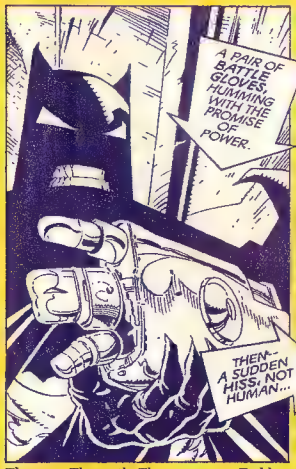
Spawn/Batman: Red Scare is not the first time McFarlane has drawn the Dark Knight: He also did three "Batman: Year Two" issues in *Detective Comics*, and he admits that the Batman has always been a special favorite.


WEAPONS-- SOLD BY AGENTS OF A FALLEN DICTATORSHIP TO GOTHAM STREET GANGS.
WEAPONS-- BUILT FOR A WAR THAT NEVER HAPPENED.
GUNS. GRENADES. ROCKET LAUNCHERS--
--AND STRANGE, HIGH-TECH DEVICES THAT HINT AT THE SMALLER HORRORS THAT WOULD HAVE FOLLOWED THE NUCLEAR NIGHTMARE.

All Batman Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1994 DC Comics Inc.

"People have asked me my favorite character in the past," he explains. "I broke into comics collecting late, when I was 17, and I didn't actually get my first job in comics until I was 23. I just like comic books as a whole, so I didn't really have one favorite guy that I grew up with, but if I had to name a guy who I thought was cool, I would say Batman. He seemed like a cool guy, and he has a cape—you don't ever have to draw anatomy if you don't want to! That was one of the reasons why Spawn has a cape—although I created him 12 years ago, the cape is there, and was influenced by Batman. I like being able to hide the anatomy and yet still do cool graphic stuff. I think Batman has many things in him that have inspired some of Spawn's stuff, and I was able to put them together!"

McFarlane admits that there will be a great deal of his trademark sweeping capes in *Spawn/Batman*. "Frank Miller wrote a pretty busy story, and I wasn't able to just have them standing there with all of their capes wide open. One of the things I wanted to do if I had had a little bit more room was have them together more often, and show the two capes being different things," he says. "I see the Spawn cape as being a big, flapping, regal thing, whereas the Batman cape goes down and slithers on the ground—when he jumps from a building, it opens up and is pretty impressive, but the only way I was going to get the two capes in the same panel was to figure out that each of them has their own style and body language."



The man. The myth. The cross-over. Todd McFarlane and Frank Miller return to old stomping grounds with *Spawn/Batman: Red Scare*.

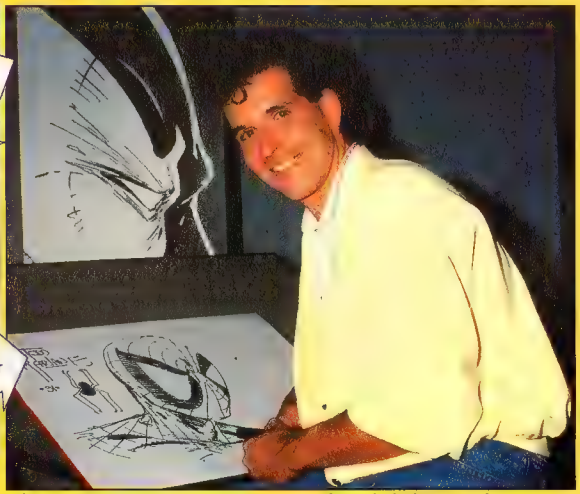


Photo: By & Copyright 1991 Albert L. Ortega

"If I'm going to cross over, I want to cross over with somebody that my mother knows," McFarlane notes of his Dark Knight decision.

All Spawn/Batman Art: Todd McFarlane All Spawn/Batman Art: Courtesy Todd McFarlane Productions

When the *Spawn/Batman* crossover was originally being planned, McFarlane confesses that he was very tempted to script his book, rather than enlist Miller as writer. "I knew the project was going to be big and I knew many people would be looking forward to it," he says. "I was going to write it. I knew it had to be a hell of a story, because this would be my one kick at the can, saying, 'Here's a stand-alone story, here's one that we hopefully can resolicit every six months and keep it going, just like *The Killing Joke* and *The Dark Knight Returns*.' I felt this had the *potential* to be that kind of an event, one that would still be saleable five years later. That was the only thing that really froze me.

"Just to get a writer for the sake of a writer was kind of a chicken way out of it, and there was only one guy who made any practical sense—and not that I haven't worked with some brilliant writers—but I made a short list of one. I decided to offer it to Frank and try to talk him into it, but if he said no, I would have taken the plunge myself and seen if I could pull it off. Obviously, the stories would have been completely different, because I have a different way of attacking stuff. Frank originally said no, but luckily he began thinking about it and getting images in his mind. He said, 'I keep seeing these stupid scenes of Batman saying this and Spawn doing that—OK, I'll give it a crack.' When he said yes, I was off the hook!

"Frank had also written *Spawn* #11 for me," he says. "All of the four guest writers that I had—Frank, Dave Sim, Neil Gaiman and Alan Moore—are brilliant writers, but they write for a different audience than I tend to sell to, and I hope they enjoyed doing a book that was just good, fun superhero stuff for kids, with no deep meaning or philosophy to it. I was at conventions with Neil and Dave, and there were 12-year-old kids with their eyes wide open saying, 'Are you the guy who wrote *Spawn*? Cool! Can you sign this?' I think there's some sort of appeal for them, some sort of innocence to the kids who buy my products—they're young at heart, they don't get into a lot of the crap that I get into when I start arguing at conventions. All they care about is whether it was a cool comic book with a cool story and wicked artwork. They break it down into a simple, 'Does this entertain me?' For Frank and some of those others, it was nice to see this innocence."

Although younger readers may be chiefly interested in the book thanks to McFarlane's artwork on the two main characters, older fans are just as excited at the thought of Miller—creator of the groundbreaking *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*—taking another crack at that character. McFarlane says that although Miller's script for the story is not particularly heavy or intricate, it's very effective.

"The plot involves two guys getting caught in circumstances that draw them together," he says. "And they beat on each other, on thugs and on other bad guys and they win! If you were to read the plot, it doesn't look all that different from what you would think a Spawn/Batman story would be. I was just telling Frank today, 'I remember when you first gave me that plot—it was good, but in my mind, it wasn't great.' Frank said his weakest point is his plotting, but he says when he has the pages, he writes his ass off! I've seen the first 35 pages of script, and he has done what he said—taken a pretty good plot, but because of his sense of writing and timing and his knack of making the characters flow, he has turned into the Dark Knight! I'm sitting there reading, saying, 'The Dark Knight is back! The character I remember Frank writing is back, except this time he's beating on Spawn.' The attitude is back, and Batman and Spawn don't get along.

"What's going to make the book work is that the whole is better than its parts. It's not so much that it's a great plot or that the scripting is brilliant or that the artwork is amazing—once you get the cool drawing and writing and coloring by Steve Oliff and lettering by Tom Orzechowski, the *package* is just going to work. The end result is that people will remember the product.

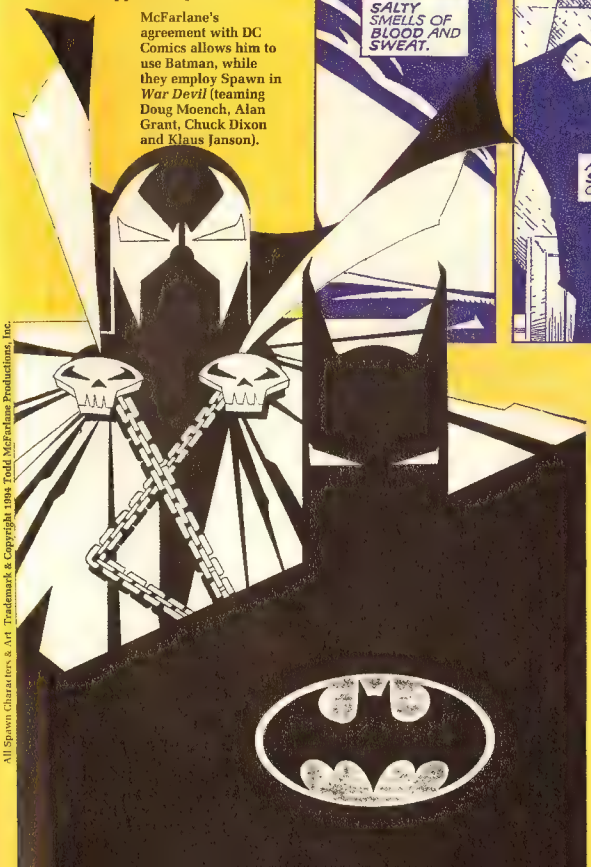
Batman: Year One was the beginning of Batman and *The Dark Knight Returns* was the end of his career. There's not any deep meaningful event in Batman's life in this book, it's just going to be a good, *fun* read that has a fun ending to it which is like an exclamation point. When you put it down, you'll just go, 'That was just too cool!' And that's it!"

McFarlane and DC Comics agreed that each could use the other's character for a one-shot book with few restrictions, but even though they couldn't make any real changes to the other's character, McFarlane says it wasn't a drawback in telling his story. "Frank would never go for anything deep, that's not what he wants to do right now. He's writing a fun, 52-page story."

The arrangement between McFarlane and DC appears unprecedented in the comics industry, with each group free to use the other's character for one story. McFarlane says it's the only way he would have agreed to a crossover. He wasn't interested in working together with DC on a single comic book. "That would *never* happen," he says. "I was at a point in my career where the only way I was ever going to be able to do this was for both of us to get our piece of the pie and have each of us run our own race.

"From my perspective, I treated it a little more like a competition. I hoped we would push each other to put out a better product than the other, and henceforth we would get two products that were a little bit better. That's one reason why it wasn't a two-part continued story. You can read theirs, and you can read ours, and there's no relationship between the two, because I want somebody to be able to decide whether they liked 'em both, they

The disjointed storytelling. The grim imagery. The narrative that drills a hotline to your mind. Miller is back, writing the Batman as only he can.



McFarlane's agreement with DC Comics allows him to use Batman, while they employ Spawn in *War Devil* (teaming Doug Moench, Alan Grant, Chuck Dixon and Klaus Janson).

All Spawn Characters & Art Trademark & Copyright 1994 Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc.

hated 'em both, or they liked one better than the other. I applaud Paul [Levitz] and everyone else at DC Comics who gave me the freedom to do what we're doing, and ultimately being able to bring Frank into the fold, because it wouldn't have happened otherwise."

McFarlane says he hasn't seen much of DC's *Batman/Spawn* one-shot, *War Devil*, with art by Klaus Janson and a script by Doug Moench, Alan Grant and Chuck Dixon, but he hopes it does well. "I approved the plot and covers. Do I like it? Sure, I do. Is it good? Yes. Is it better than mine? Nope, I don't think so. Do I want it to not sell as well as mine? I don't want it to sit on the shelves, no, because that's not good for anybody. If I can turn out a little better product, though, it's not because I draw better, it's because I have better components. Steve, Tom and Frank are some of the best in the business, so I'm riding on the coattails of other people now.

"If DC would have made the choice for me, they wouldn't have picked the guys I picked, and if I was putting their book together, I probably wouldn't have picked the guys they did, but it's all personal taste—I'm sure they'll put out a solid, exciting product," he says.

The artist is very complimentary of the creative talents on the title, though he says he's somewhat surprised that DC didn't utilize high-profile creators who were more familiar with both characters. "This is a big event. Given the success of the death of Superman and the new Batman, the event works very well in comics right now, and Miller being back on Batman *is* an event. Because it was an event, I thought they might have picked people who were maybe more marquee names—and I'm not trying to put down who they've got. Neil Gaiman, for instance, is a guy who works for DC who has also written *Spawn*. Grant Morrison, who did three issues for me, knows about *Spawn* and about DC—he has even written *Arkham Asylum*! I had hoped they might have found someone there who knew what the characters were about. I've always been a huge fan of Klaus Janson, but I don't know that 12-year-old kids are as keen about his stuff as they are about, say, Joe Quesada, who just finished doing some Batman work and created the new costume. From [*Batman* editor] Denny O'Neil's point-of-view, it probably came from loyalty [to his monthly writers], and I don't think you can argue with that decision.

On the basis of making it more of an event, because it's a hot subject, I would probably have picked more hot people to whom the 12-year-old kids could relate. A Neil Gaiman-Joe Quesada book would have really kept me on my toes, but both books are going to be good. This will be a good month for comic books!"

Design & Layout, Jim McLernon

"The only way to get the two capes in the same panel was to figure out that each [character] has its own style and body language," relates McFarlane.

Miller's Knight

For many, the most exciting element of *Spawn/Batman: Red Scare* is not the artist or the characters, but the writer. Frank Miller, who revolutionized comics in the 1980s with *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, is returning to the character once again, but he says he initially turned down Todd McFarlane's offer to write it.

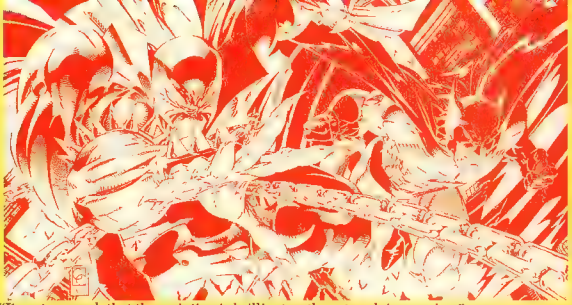
"What made me change my mind is that—for one reason—Todd's a pretty persistent guy," he laughs. "I had a lot of fun working with him on an earlier issue of *Spawn*. But my reservation about it, since [Batman] is my biggest credit, was that I wanted to make sure I had something different to do with him. Then, one day, I realized I had done the worn-out, beat-up old Batman [in *The Dark Knight Returns*] and the young and bumbling Batman [in *Batman: Year One*], and I had *never* done the guy in his prime. So, I'm doing a very confident, very crabby Batman in his early 30s. It's pretty unrestrained!"

McFarlane turned his regular monthly *Spawn* comic over to Morrison and artist Greg Capullo for three issues to give himself time to work on the crossover, and previously brought on Gaiman, Sim, Moore and Miller to write issues. McFarlane doesn't have a problem letting others take over his creation.

"In terms of my own book, I had no problems because I got to hand-pick the guys," he says. "In terms of lending him out to DC, I knew what the rules were because I made up the rules. I said, 'I'll lend you Spawn—do whatever you want to do with him, but you give me Batman and let me do whatever I want to do with him. Let's both go and run the race!' I'm not looking over the shoulders of Doug Moench, Chuck Dixon or Alan Grant—I've read all of their stuff and they're going to do a good job. Once I allow my kid to leave my backyard, I just have to trust that the people keeping their eyes on him will give it their best effort. I don't have any problem with anybody else touching it, because if I did, I wouldn't let him out just for the sake of appeasing my own childish need to draw another cape!"

McFarlane feels the highly-touted "guest writer" issues in *Spawn* #8-11 with Moore, Miller, Gaiman and Sim were successful in that each writer gave him something slightly different to work with.

"Alan gave me Hell, so I figured I now have the starting ground for Hell," explains McFarlane. "Dave Sim, who did what was essentially a story of himself and myself, wrote something that was totally off the wall for a superhero comic book. Frank's issue was good clean superhero shoot-'em-up stuff, and Neil Gaiman gave me a little bit of heaven, and some floating elements that I was able to pull off. Each one of them brought something different to the table, so it wasn't a four-part story of them battling the Overlord."



Art: Greg Capullo

"Its not so much that the scripting is brilliant or the artwork is amazing," raves McFarlane. "The package is just going to work."

McFarlane says that despite his perception as a big-name comics pro, he was a little afraid to contact the writers. "I was just as nervous about phoning these guys as anybody else," he admits. "But, they're not like demigods—they squeeze the toothpaste from the middle just like you or I. They just happen to write great comics. They're not full of themselves, and that's what impressed me more than anything else. They're just cool guys."

Giving credence to McFarlane's testimonials is the fact that Moore is writing the *Violator* spin-off miniseries for McFarlane, who says, "Alan Moore is just a kooky guy! He's fun to talk to, and a ball of energy!"

Though rumors have been rampant about *Spawn* licensing deals and even talks with Hollywood, McFarlane says he probably won't make any major announcements, at least until *Spawn/Batman* has been released and the excitement subsides. "I won't announce anything until I have drawings and prototypes to show to people," he says, though a major bit of news is in the offing.

McFarlane will return to writing and drawing the monthly *Spawn* comic for the foreseeable future. He says the only inter-company book he would consider for *Spawn* would be a *Spawn/Spider-Man* crossover.

"Depending on the success of this first book, we could either pick up right at the end or do another story—who knows, maybe this could be an annual event!" he enthuses. "I see this as a bit of a competition, and for all I know, they may be offended by some of the things I've said. I'm much more

(continued on page 60)

Miller isn't aware of any rules set up by DC ahead of time regarding the use of Batman in the book. "There were none whatsoever, which is why they're going to be so surprised when they find out that Batman's dead!" he jokes. "Actually, I haven't run into much trouble. We're all working independently. There's no relationship between the two projects; they don't share a timeline. I haven't even read what DC has done. I just told Todd to let me know if there were any conflicts or redundancies between the two, but I didn't want to be distracted. I had my idea of what would happen with them both, and just wanted to pursue that *without* thinking about dovetailing it with somebody else's version."

He credits the previous success of *Spawn* in part to McFarlane's instincts, which is also one reason Miller believes that *Spawn/Batman* will work.

"Todd thinks about his readers a great deal and talks about them," he says. "He's amazingly in touch with them. The reason he has the most popular comic every month is that he's in tune with those kids out there."

McFarlane's public persona is very flamboyant, but Miller says their working relationship was great. "It's like a party!" he exclaims. "We're having an absolute blast! He sends me pages and I send him script back, and we spend a lot of time laughing."

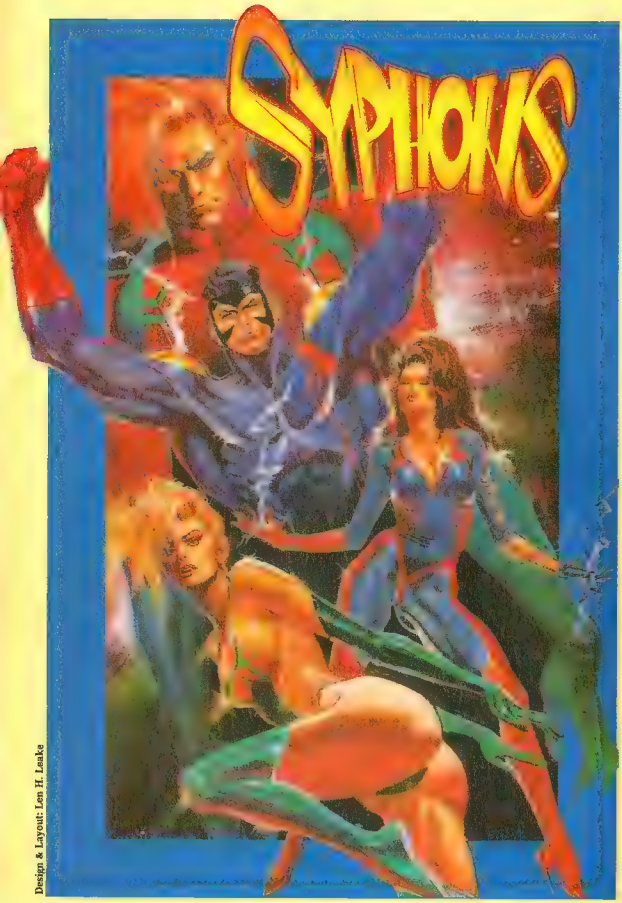
One of the biggest reasons why Miller was reluctant to return to Batman was the fear of having to live up to the standards he previously set for the character.

"I feel a little bit like I'm sitting on an oven, because *The Dark Knight* got so much attention," he says. "It's inevitable that some people will read it and say it isn't as good as *Dark Knight*, but I couldn't let that stop me. If there's a chance to have this good a time, I *have* to take it!"

—Kim Howard Johnson

Art: Frank Miller/Todd McFarlane

The man is back with a vengeance—not just the Dark Knight but Frank Miller, scribe of *Spawn/Batman: Red Scare*.



Design & Layout: Len H. Leake

They're super-powered teens—who better to serve as humanity's defenders?

By HARLEY JEBENS

The time was 1986. A group of four teenagers were accidentally given super powers through alien technology. Those powers thrust them into the middle of a conflict between two alien races—the Katari and the Gorians—battling to see which of them could claim the Earth as a way station in their respective conquerings of the universe. Thus, these four teens—the Syphons—became the reluctant defenders of humanity.

Sound familiar? Probably not, because *Syphons*—a bi-monthly title published by Now Comics (which also does comics chronicling the adventures of *Speed Racer* and *The Green Hornet*)—only lasted for a scant seven issues in 1986 and 1987 before fading away into the oblivion that cancellation usually brings.

Not in this case, however. Now Comics publisher and editor-in-chief Tony Caputo has decided that what didn't quite work in the late '80s might just work in the mid-90s and so, this month, his company launches a three-issue *Syphons* mini-series. Of course, in this case, the Syphons have an ace-in-the-hole that they didn't have before—artist Mark Beachum.

Geoff White, the mini-series' editor, explains, "From a fan's perspective, Beachum's art is definitely going to make this book stand out. He's recognized for his past work on *Spider-Man* and *Green Lantern*. His art is very stylized. It's a little more 'adult' in nature than your average comic. The cover will say 'mature readers.' When the fans see his art—especially with the way artists have become so important in comics—that'll be the thing that draws their immediate attention."

Allen Curtis was the writer and artist on the original *Syphons* series. He's back for this re-launch, serving as the mini-series' scripter. He doesn't seem too upset about relinquishing his pencilling duties this go-round.

"The chance to work with Mark was a big plus for me," Curtis says. "I'm a big fan of his, and just to be able to work with him means a lot to me."

Caputo says, "I always had it in the back of my mind to bring *Syphons* back, but I wanted to do it better than ever, as a perfect project. With Allen writing and then getting Mark to pencil, it came together perfectly. Beachum is doing all three issues; he's pencilling and inking it. I had talked to Mark a couple of times during the eight years that I've been publishing, and I never really had anything that I thought he would have fun doing. I was chatting with him one day, and I asked, 'You want to do *Syphons*?' He said, 'It sounds interesting.' So, I sent him some sample copies and he was really excited about it.

"What we at Now Comics can do that some of the bigger companies sometimes can't," Caputo maintains, "is give a lot more creative freedom to the artists, more space to do what they like to do in the time that they like to do it. We really never gave Mark a deadline—at all. He has been working on this for a little over a year. That artistic freedom, which allowed him to put a bit of his own creative energy into the concept, appealed to him."

Curtis says, "As the writer, I was trying to approach this mini-series, in the beginning, as sort of a mystery story. There are four Syphons from the original series (Mark Baron, known as Knightfire; Lisa Browning, a.k.a. Raze, Tricia Knowles—Stardancer; and Tim West, who goes by the name Brigade), but in the first issue of this mini-series, Tim is missing. The rest have been searching for him for six months. Their search gets them involved in a situa-

The Katari—aliens from another galaxy—are coming, bringing with them a new technology, syphonetics. These four teens bear an awesome power.

tion where there are other Syphons looking for Tim. People are getting caught up in UFO sightings and that type of thing. And [the three remaining Syphons] are trying to figure out if all this is related to Tim's disappearance."

Hold on one second here...just who or what is a Syphon anyway?

Curtis explains: "The Syphons were...now you'll have to go back to the original series. The Katari were at war with another alien race called the Gorians. The Katari created this technology called syphonetics. Basically, it infused people with energy and they became conduits through which the energy could be released in different forms. The Katari called them Syphons. So, when the Katari tried to invade Earth, these four teenagers were accidentally infused with the energy; and they became Syphons.

"In the original series, the Katari intended to take over Earth; they had been taking over the galaxy, going from planet to planet, forging an empire. They saw Earth as a territory that could lead to other parts of the galaxy, sort of a way station to different areas. It would be a very important part of their empire, if they could control it. And they wanted to control Earth before the Gorians could, because they were at war with the Gorians. The Katari came to Earth through a Syphonic gate, and at the original series' end, that gate was closed, so the Katari couldn't get back to Earth. The ones who were already here were stranded on Earth.

"So now, this series just deals with [those marooned Katari]. Stranded on Earth, their whole attitude is, 'Well, we're stuck here, but we can still take control.' So, they're trying to infiltrate the government and take control of sensitive areas. The Syphons are the only ones who know about them, so it's up to the Syphons to try to filter out different Katari and stop them."

All Syphons Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 Now Comics

There is a past between Tricia Knowles and Mark Baron (Knightfire), a past that surfaces whenever Tricia finds herself in jeopardy.

Publisher Tony Caputo is jazzed about future *Syphon* projects. "We've already planned on it. We would have Mark do the art again, if he wants to [do it]."

"From a fan's perspective, [Mark] Beachum's art is definitely going to make this book stand out," says Geoff White, the mini-series' editor.

Typically, this super-team is made up of four disparate individuals. "Tricia Knowles is the leader of the Syphons," says Curtis. "She can emit rays of light like laser beams. She can also light up her whole body so she can produce a blinding flash of light. Tricia is very business-like. As the leader of the Syphons, she's quite serious all the time. She tends to be a little wary of strangers because, in the original series, they were more-or-less betrayed by someone they trusted, a 'father figure' to them. She was hurt more by that than the rest of the team. As a result, she keeps to herself.

"Mark—Knightfire—can emit heat blasts and fire. He can control heat or fire around him, in whatever ways he wishes. He tries to be serious, but at the same time, he's a very attractive guy. He has learned that he can get a lot of things easily because of his good looks. So, he has become a playboy type. He also has a serious side, because he and Tricia have always been very close. But she has thrown up this emotional wall between herself and everybody else...they're still close, but every once in a while, he'll run into that wall. As a defense mechanism, he tends to pretend he's sort of a playboy, but he still has a crush on Tricia.

"Lisa is the youngest. Her Syphon name is Raze. She has a cocky, over-

All Syphons Art: Mark Beachum/Colors: Patrick Williams

The Syphons must beat the odds to achieve their goal–finding their missing member, Brigade, and holding off the Katari invaders.

confident attitude, but she can afford that. She's the most powerful of the four Syphons. She has the power to throw up and control a wall of energy, and just make it...explode, with devastating force. She tends to be overconfident, but at the same time, she's very, very professional when it comes to dealing with the Katari."

Originally, "The Syphons were part of an organization called Skyview," Curtis explains. "When they first received their powers, there was a guy, Mr. Cross, who runs Skyview. He took them in, trained them and showed them how to use their powers. The Syphons felt betrayed because he was using them, more or less, for his own ends. He wanted to totally wipe out the Katari. The Syphons wanted the same thing; they started out as teenagers and didn't realize that Cross was as ruthless as he was as far as just out-and-out killing all the Katari. All they wanted to do was protect their planet. When they found out that he was actually going out and assassinating Katari, they didn't want any part of that...at first. They ended up leaving Skyview because of those 'philosophical differences.' Since Cross had lied to them, they felt very betrayed by that. Skyview was a big part of how the Syphons got started."

It is a member of Skyview, Soldier, who comes to the Syphons at the mini-series' start, and sends them on the quest for Tim West, their missing member. Curtis says, "Tim West, Brigade in the original series, was a carefree, overconfident type of person. Now, he's going through a series of changes physically and mentally. You'll find out in the second issue what happens to him. He's going to become a loner, as opposed to the way he originally was. His powers used to be super-strength and invulnerability, but that will change."

Every frontier must have its line of defense. The frontier is Earth, and its defenders are the Syphons.

The Syphons' quest for their missing member leads them into conflict with people whose powers eerily mirror their own. Curtis says, "The Katari have been creating more Syphons. And these four Syphons [Mark, Lisa, Tricia and Tim] are the only thing that's going to be around to protect Earth from these others, the Katari-Syphons.

"One of the main Katari-Syphons is a woman named Shooter, their leader. There's also Batch. He can enlarge himself and has super-strength. And if he's hit with a very powerful blast of anything, he splits into two separate entities, each bigger than the first. Another Katari-Syphon who runs with Shooter is Mikey. He has super-

(continued on page 62)

AMAZING ARTISTRY

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Drawing Spider-Man was Mark Bagley's childhood dream. Now, it's his adult reality.

Art: Mark Bagley/Sam De La Rosa Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

Spider-Man is in for some amazing changes in his life, according to *Amazing Spider-Man* artist Mark Bagley.

"This isn't hype, and this isn't baloney," Bagley says. "It's not Batman getting his back broken and having him return, it's not Superman dying and coming back—what's going to happen to Spider-Man is going to affect everything that has happened in the last 20 years in a way that no one will believe."

Bagley says that the top secret changes that will affect Spidey were so sweeping that they almost didn't get approved by the Marvel bosses.

"We were sitting around a table trying to sell this idea to [editor-in-chief] Tom DeFalco—he wasn't there the first day when we came up with it," says Bagley. "Terry Kavanaugh [editor] gets the credit for having the idea, and we had to sell it to [group editor] Danny Fingeroth, who can be kind of timid when it comes to doing something so far out. We sold it to him, and he was enthused by the end of the day. DeFalco said 'No way!' but he listened to us. By the day's end, he was so excited he's writing one of the books. It's the kind of idea we're going to look at and say, 'I can't believe we're doing this!' but it's cool!"

There are more changes coming for the creative team, notes Bagley, as new scripter J. M. DeMatteis takes over with *Amazing Spider-Man* #389, the conclusion of the four-part "Pursuit" crossover.

"We're getting along real well," Bagley says. "Marc DeMatteis is a very sincere guy and we have a lot of fun talking together. His stories are psychologically oriented, which is good—they're going to turn the book around a little bit in a different direction. I tend to lean toward the action stories more than the psychological stories, but I think you can mix them up and make them very interesting. I enjoy drawing the psychological stuff, too, in which the mood is more somber and exploratory. It's going to be interesting."

"What's going to happen to Spider-Man is going to affect *everything* that has happened in the past 20 years," raves *Amazing Spider-Man* artist Mark Bagley.

Bagley is full of praise for his former collaborator, scripter David Michelinie, who's moving on to do another super-popular character for DC. "I enjoyed working with Michelinie a lot," Bagley says. "Apparently, he's going to be doing *Action Comics* now, so he's landing on his feet! It was a mutual parting of ways, and I can't think of anything more fun than going from one flagship character to another! He's a good guy and I wish him all the luck in the world."

The next few issues of *Amazing Spider-Man* will pick up on some elements set up in the "Maximum Carnage" multi-parter. "Our storyline involves Shriek and Carrion," Bagley says. "Shriek has developed a mother complex and feels this way about Carrion, who has been cured of the Carrion virus. She comes after him and re-infects him. We're not making Spider-Man a dark killer, but things aren't going well for him, and Marc wants to explore some of that with another character, called Nocturne, that he created in an Annual. I think he wants to develop a relationship between Nocturne and Spider-Man, trying to re-ground Spider-Man in the idea of being an outsider."

All Art: Mark Bagley

All Spider-Man Marvel Cards: Trademark & Copyright 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group

Bagley took on the daunting task of illustrating all 150 of the new Spider-Man trading cards—the creative freedom is what lured him to the project.

After making a name for himself pencilling Marvel's *New Warriors*, Bagley has entrenched himself firmly with the premier book of Marvel's flagship character—and he couldn't be happier. Illustrating *Amazing Spider-Man* is a childhood dream.

"When I was a kid, there was just *Amazing Spider-Man*," says Bagley. "This was the one I wanted to do. Then, they came up with *Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Web of Spider-Man*. There are good people on those, but *Amazing* is *the one*. I wanted to be *the* Spider-Man artist, and it's tough to be *the* Spider-Man artist when there are four other books. As good as Tom Lyle is and Sal Buscema and Alex Saviuk—I still consider myself, in my own humble way, as *the* Spider-Man artist, because I'm doing *Amazing*. On the third or fourth time I met Stan Lee, he actually remembered me, and he said, 'You do *Amazing*, right?' and I said yeah. He said, 'Yeah, the one that counts!' "

Bagley admits that he has very few tricks of the trade in drawing all of the spider-webbing for the character, aside from continued practice. "The webbing basically comes from between the eyes," he says. "Every now and then I'll see an artist who does the webbing going the wrong way up the leg, and that drives an anal-retentive guy like me crazy! Basically, it all comes away from the eyes. There are no real tricks to it. It's just doing it, and that's the trick. There's no fast way to do it—you get behind schedule and you want to do breakdowns so you can knock out a few pages real quick, but then you get stuck doing the webbing! That takes a little while."

Along with the web-slinger, Bagley enjoys being able to draw many of the great Spider-Villains. "I've gotten to draw most all of them now, especially with the new trading cards," he says. "I always liked Doctor Octopus a lot, though I haven't had a chance to draw him professionally yet. I always liked the Rhino; guys like that are fun. I like the Scorpion, and Molten Man—I want to make the Molten Man a villain again. I'm trying to figure out why he's so damn well-adjusted—I mean, he's metal! He can't touch a woman without breaking her skin, or feel anything—he should be really messed up and anti-social, but they've got him wearing cardigans! Why is this? I always thought Doctor Doom made a great villain for Spider-Man. Every time he showed up, it was always interesting. It's a different mix for him, and gets him involved with other people. The Kingpin does make a better Daredevil villain than a Spider-Man villain."

Some of Spidey's bad guys are tougher than others. "Cardiac is a *real* pain in the butt to draw," he says. "He has all of these Cardiac lines going down his chest, and to get those to work out right is a real pain. There are also all of those swirls."

Bagley says that extensive multi-part stories that run through all of the Spider-Man titles have advantages and disadvantages. " 'Maximum Carnage' was a debacle, as far as I'm concerned," he says. "It sold OK, but when we were all sitting around a table [planning it], we didn't want to

Bagley didn't exactly leap at the offer to do the trading cards, but doesn't regret for a minute having done them.

desk and turn on the traffic report so I can laugh. Living outside of a major metropolitan area, I don't have to do that anymore! I'll wear sweat pants, socks or slippers, and a sweatshirt or T-shirt, depending on the weather. I work real steady until 2:30 or 3 p.m., when my little girl gets home. Then, I usually go back to work about 5 or 6 p.m. and work until I feel like quitting. I'm planning on working less this year. It was a hairy year, between the Venom thing, the 30th anniversary and the trading cards I just finished doing. It has been kind of hectic!"

The new Spider-Man trading cards certainly show the time and talent that Bagley devoted to the series. "I got a list of 149 cards or so, all broken down into categories—*Spider-Man's Amazing Powers*, *Spider-Man's Storylines*, the *Strangest Transformations of Spider-Man*. There are seven to nine blocks that make up one image—I got to pick all my images. I got to draw the death of Gwen Stacy! I read that story when I was a kid and I cried. Of course, I was a weird kid…" he jokes. "It was a lot of hard work. It's tough to keep the quality totally consistent over that many cards, but some of them came out really nice. I was really happy with them. Paul Mounts is painting them, and they're inked by everybody from Adam Hughes to Art Farmer."

Bagley says that the creative freedom he was given was one of the most appealing aspects of the Spider-Man trading cards. "I had almost total say," he explains. "They basically gave me the categorized list with *Spider-Man's Villains*, *Spider-Man's Greatest Battles* and event cards like the *Death of Gwen Stacy*. I was able to go, 'OK, I would like to be able to draw come up with a piece of crap, which is pretty much what it ended up being. I don't really like that sort of tightly-woven thing. But, having general ongoing themes is fine. I don't know how the *Superman* books do it so well—they do it great. But, we have storylines coming up which will be going through all of the books, not like a 'Maximum Carnage' thing. They're going to blow everybody away."

Peter Parker's personal life is just as enjoyable for Bagley to draw as Spider-Man's fight scenes. "The punching and the hitting can get boring after a while," he says. "How many different ways can you show somebody caving someone else's teeth in? The character stuff, with people talking and relating to each other—making that interesting—is just as fun. It doesn't sell as well later [in the original art market] when I get the pages back, though!"

The artist has gotten his work down to a steady routine. "I'm usually at my desk by 8:30 a.m.," he explains. "I get up at 6:30 to get my daughter off to school and do the family thing. I'm at my desk by 8 or 8:30—I commute down the hall to my

Art: Mark Bagley/Randy Emberlin

"For a superhero, he's a very human character," notes Bagley. "He's a normal guy—that makes him very approachable." He's not immune to life's harsher turns.

Art: Mark Bagley/Larry Mahlstedt/Paul Mounts

All Spider-Man Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993, 1998 Marvel Entertainment Group

DeMatteis' intentions. "But things aren't going well for him."

this particular scene from that one,' trying to pick a scene that was representational of the whole. If they wanted Spider-Man and the Rhino, I would do Spider-Man slugging the hell out of the Rhino!

"Some of them were pretty self-explanatory. *Spider-Man Versus* cards were basically just Spider-Man vs. these guys, but then there was something like the *Death of Gwen Stacy* card, and I had to figure out which part of that storyline to draw, because that involved the Green Goblin's death, Gwen dying, and all of the trouble he was having with Harry Osborne. I ended up with her dead on top of the bridge, and the Goblin in the background. The flip side has an illustration of the Goblin getting speared. The images were all basically up to me."

"It was a lot of hard work," says Bagley of his trading card experience. "But some of them came out really nice.

Not only does Bagley get to draw the web-slinger himself, but he also has a blast with Spider-Man's Rogues Gallery.

Even though he's currently the signature artist on the *Spider-Man* family of titles, Bagley isn't involved with any storyboards or designs for James Cameron's anxiously-awaited *Spider-Man* movie (slated for summer 1995).

"I don't even know if they're that far along," he says. "I would like to do that—it would be fun. It would really be an experience. I don't know if I'll be on the book when the film comes out, because at the rate it's going, it could be the year 2000!"

Coming up much sooner for Spider-Fans is the new *Spider-Man* animated series. "I'm really looking forward to that show, which I really haven't seen anything of, except for a couple of little stills," he says. "It looks pretty interesting. It's coming from some of the same people who did the *Batman* animated series. They're going for a different look on it."

Spider-Man fascinates Bagley for many reasons, but one of the most significant is his "everyman" appeal. "For a superhero, he's a very human character," notes Bagley. "In his real life, he's a normal guy, and that makes him very approachable, very appealing. What I've liked least about him recently is that he has a gorgeous model wife, his job is going great for him, he has published a book—that's not the Peter Parker that I grew up with! I fell in love with the guy who couldn't get a date, was kind of a loner, lived in a crappy apartment. Now he's in a three-story townhouse, for crying out loud! That *isn't* the character that I wanted to draw, but we're doing some stuff about that—nothing too terribly major, at least until the big, terrible, major thing happens around *Amazing Spider-Man* #400. What I most liked about the character when I was a kid was the fact that he's this poor schlep having to put up with everybody, and that makes him fun to draw."

Bagley says he also enjoys drawing Spider-Man because the Web-Slinger is so involved in the Marvel Universe.

Mary Jane Art: Mark Bagley/Randy Emberlin/Colors: Bob Sharen

Art: Mark Bagley/Randy Emberlin

"I lean toward the action stories more than the psychological stories," states Bagley. "But I think you can mix them up and make them interesting."

Art: Mark Bagley/Larry Mahlstedt/Paul Mounts

"When I was reading it, the Fantastic Four showed up, the Silver Surfer showed up, the Human Torch showed up," he says. "I like being involved in that whole milieu of the Marvel Universe. I enjoy drawing that. I'm hoping Marc DeMatteis and I can keep that going, without making it 'Guest Star Central,' because that's not the point. The point is that it used to be such a small universe that it was consistent all the way through. He would be swinging through the city and see the Avengers over there. Now it's much less that, it's more, 'Wow, look who's showing up this month!' "

Mark Bagley says drawing *The Amazing Spider-Man* is fulfilling a longtime goal. "It was literally my favorite book when I was a kid," he says, "and Gil Kane was drawing it when I was really getting into it, with the death of Gwen Stacy and all that stuff. It was the *one* book I always wanted to draw. Marvel doesn't have anything right now that I'm really interested in doing besides *Spider-Man*, and the way the market is now, I'm going to hang with *Spider-Man* and see where it takes me. I'm enjoying it—and it pays real well. It doesn't get much better than that!"

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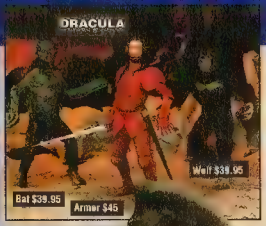

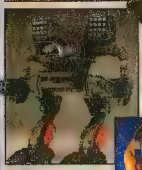

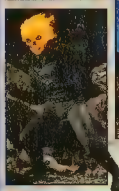

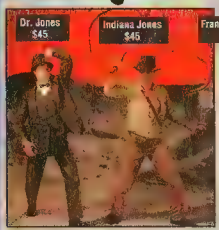

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Mark Schultz continues his stunning tales of

Cadillacs AND Dinosaurs

By S.C. RINGGENBERG

As CBS's *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* animated show roars its way through the Saturday morning cartoon lineup, Mark Schultz, creator of *Xenozoic Tales*, the comic book which inspired *Cadillacs*, probably can't help feeling like a victim of his own success.

His career is revving up into overdrive with the appearance of the *Cadillacs* TV show, a Topps comic book version and a whole slew of new products including action figures and toy Cadillacs from Tyco, clothing, lunchboxes, new candy bars and even temporary tattoos. But, the extra work of trying to keep a hand in all these spin-offs has been difficult for the painstakingly meticulous Schultz. "Right now I'm very slow," Schultz admits ruefully. "With all these other deals that are going on, the TV show, the other comic starting and other merchandising things that have been going on, they've been very time-consuming. For the past year, it has been more that kind of thing, but now, finally, with the show on, I'm getting back into my book again."

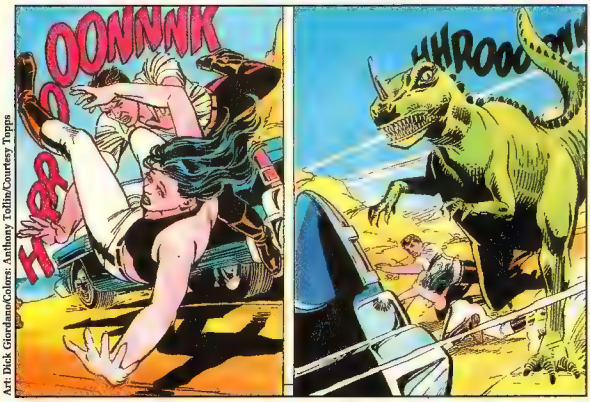
Although Schultz's output on *Xenozoic Tales* has been limited to only 12 issues, plus some miscellaneous illustrations for limited edition serigraphs, product packaging and T-shirts, the sheer excellence of Schultz's work has had, it seems, an inspiring effect on others.

Nelvana, the Canadian animation firm that won an Emmy for *Beetlejuice*, is charged with bringing *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* to the TV screen. As if to underscore Nelvana's commitment to quality, the sharp-looking *Cadillacs* animation boasts 20,000 more cels per episode than other Saturday morning cartoon shows. And each episode costs $430,000, making *Cadillacs* one of the most expensive shows on Saturday morning television.

Art: Bs. & Copyright 1993 William Stout/Courtesy Topps

Design & Layout: Len H. Leake

From the mind of Mark Schultz comes the Xenozoic Age—a time when the past and future collide and both *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* roam the plains.



Art: Dick Giordano/Colors: Anthony Tollin/Courtesy Topps

Schultz can do no more than consult on Topps' *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* book. "Roy Thomas [writer] has been working with me to get the details right."

The credits of the creative personnel behind TV's *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* are also quite impressive. Sasha Harari, the man responsible for producing Oliver Stone's *The Doors*, produces the series. Steven de Souza, who scripted *The Running Man* and *48 HRS.* (STARLOG #125), wrote the *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* series bible and pilot, "Rogue," which was based on one of Schultz's earliest *Xenozoic Tales.*

Although the *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* show debuted in fall 1993, negotiations for an animated version of *Xenozoic* were in progress for several years. Schultz and Kitchen Sink publisher Denis Kitchen had already signed with Galaxie Entertainment to license *Xenozoic Tales* to other media. At that point, as Schultz describes it, "Galaxie started taking it around to different animation studios to try and interest them. Nelvana showed that they understood it best, and we reached an agreement." However, once the deal had been struck, the work had only begun. "A script had to be produced and presented to the networks. Steven de Souza, one of our executive producers, wrote the pilot and presented it to CBS in early December '92. And for some reason or other, the decision about whether or not to go with this kept getting pushed back." As the last days of 1992 ticked away and Schultz's tension mounted, there came the dramatic, last-minute news of CBS's decision. "On Christmas Eve, they finally made a decision that, yes, they were going to give it a shot.

"Once the OK came from CBS, the Galaxie people, Kitchen and myself started meeting with the Nelvana staff in Toronto to rough out the direction we thought it should go in, the tenor of the scripts and the series' look." So far, Schultz notes with evident relief, "It has all been very cooperative."

As the original creator, Schultz *does* have veto power on the TV show, but he has chosen to exercise this sparingly. "On paper, I can veto a lot. But realistically, I want to work with Nelvana. Even though things are not necessarily done the way I would do them, these people know their business. I've got to trust them."

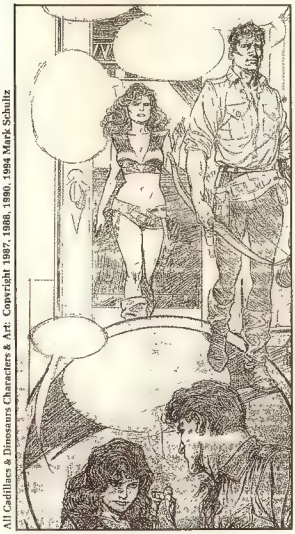
However, Schultz *did* insist on some things. "I was pretty adamant about getting the dinosaurs' look just right. We didn't want the old tail-dragging type of dinosaurs. We wanted them to look like the up-to-date dinosaurs of present-day theories, with the tails off the ground and a more aggressive, horizontal look."

But even with the changes and simplifications made to his original idea, Schultz is impressed by the results. "What amazes me more than anything

else and what I'm most happy with is that the spirit is *still* there. The way situations are handled, the characters are generally using their brains instead of beating up other people. And the concern for the environment, the concern for right and wrong and morality, is still communicated in the stories. It's pretty marvelous that they've kept that, especially for Saturday morning animation."

While Schultz doesn't have time to do more than consult on the scripts for the new Topps *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* comic that debuts this month, he's satisfied with the creators Topps has hired. "I'm very excited. Roy Thomas is writing the stories, and he has been working with me carefully to get the details right." As for the stories of the Topps title (edited by Len Brown), Schultz describes them as being somewhere "between the animated show and my book, but there will be some things related to the show. There will be regular appearances by the TV show's evil poachers."

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs will be published as a series of three-to-four-issue story arcs, Schultz explains. "Topps always wants to have complete stories. I don't think they want it to become an ongoing soap-opera type of thing. Topps definitely wanted to have the comic run in three-issue arcs that have specific endings every so often.



All Cadillacs & Dinosaurs Characters & Art: Copyright 1987, 1988, 1990, 1994 Mark Schultz

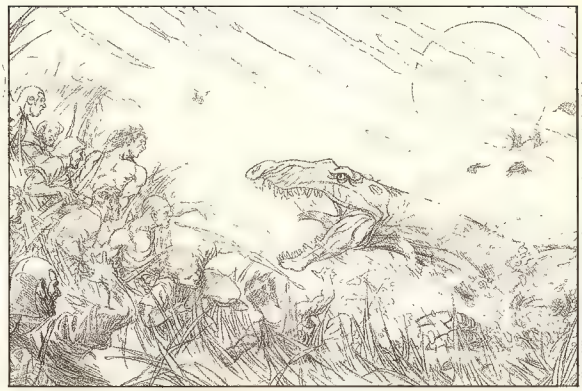
"It's a cliché to say that your characters take on a life of their own, but it is kind of true," says Schultz of Jack Tenrec and Hannah Dundee.

"Will I ever be fast enough to do more than two or three issues a year?" asks Schultz. With the stunning quality of his *pencils* (as reproduced here), we don't think so.

"The first three issues are being drawn and inked by Dick Giordano. It really looks great," Schultz says with obvious enthusiasm. Giordano will also do the covers for the newsstand edition of those issues, while the direct-sales edition covers are being drawn by legendary dinosaur delineator William Stout. "Bill Stout is obviously one of my biggest influences, especially the way I do dinosaurs. I was just overjoyed that he was interested in doing it." Six-page back-up stories will be handled by Spanish artist Esteban Maroto, Allen Nunis, an artist who has worked with Al Williamson, and others.

Schultz, a former commercial artist, conceived the Xenozoic Age, in which mankind must battle for survival in the ruins of a post-apocalyptic Earth amongst dinosaurs and other more mysterious life forms, in the early '80s. He submitted his first story to publisher Denis Kitchen. Kitchen's response was encouraging, and Schultz entered the comics field in fall 1986, with the publication of the first Xenozoic Tale in *Death Rattle* #8. By the following February, Schultz had his own *Xenozoic Tales* title. Originally

There's something to be said for Xenozoic women.



"The stories have evolved from being the kind of twist-ending E.C. type to more of an epic scale ongoing adventure," reveals Schultz.

All Cadillacs & Dinosaurs Pencil Art: By & Courtesy Mark Schultz

intended as a bi-monthly, *Xenozoic*'s frequency has gone down to two, or sometimes one issue a year. Despite the book's decreasing appearances, Schultz's meticulous attention to quality, both in his art and his scripts, has kept his core audience intact, while the critical accolades and awards have kept rolling in. Since 1989, Schultz has earned four Harvey awards and two Eisners. (He previously discussed *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* in CS #27.)

Although he would like to increase his output, Schultz is committed to working in a very detailed, time-consuming style of dynamic realism. "Will I ever be fast enough to get out more than two or three issues a year? No, I don't think so. I've tried and been very unhappy with the results. Even if I had no distractions other than doing the book, I would still be, by comics industry standards, *incredibly* slow."

Schultz is clearly excited by all his new ventures into TV and merchandising, but also acknowledges the pain of not being able to work on his first love: The comic book that has inspired all this attention. "I'm still enjoying it very much. I'm frustrated that I don't work any quicker than I do. I have lots of ideas that I can't get out because I'm so slow in actually executing the artwork."

It's an old axiom of writing that all fictional action is character-driven, and in Schultz's case, it's literally true. "Originally, I would say my story ideas pretty much dictated how the characters would behave, but as I've become more and more familiar and comfortable with the characters that they, you know, it's a cliché to say that your characters take on a life of their own, but it *is* kind of true. They really do define what happens in the stories now. As I learn more about them, story ideas are suggested. I say, this would be an interesting situation to put Jack in to figure out how he would react, or Hannah has this character flaw here that would be fun to exploit, and let her work her way out of this one."

The more character-oriented stories of the current *Xenozoic* scripts are "something I definitely wanted," Schultz explains, "because I'm a big admirer of guys like Will Eisner and Harvey Kurtzman, who did a lot of that." *Xenozoic Tales* has changed in other ways as well. "The stories have evolved from being the kind of twist-ending E.C. type to more of an epic-scale ongoing adventure."

At this point, Schultz is shooting for May publication for *Xenozoic Tales* #13. While he's reticent to give away too much of the story before publication, Schultz shares some plot details, likening this tale to the classic adventure story "The Most Dangerous Game," in which a madman hunts human prey on an island preserve. Beyond that reference, Schultz allows, "If I was going to give you a one-sentence synopsis, it's that it involves political intrigue and jealousy. We meet Balclutha, Hannah's old lover in this, who's still her official consort. He gets jealous of Jack and Hannah's relationship." The villainous Balclutha will become an instrument of "Jack gaining power in Hannah's city," Schultz elaborates, adding, "Jack is the newcomer to Hannah's city, and as an outsider, he's basically powerless. And that's not a position he takes well. He's used to having a certain amount of control over events. So, his first instinct is to start doing what he has to to bargain some power for himself."

As for his long-range plans for Jack,

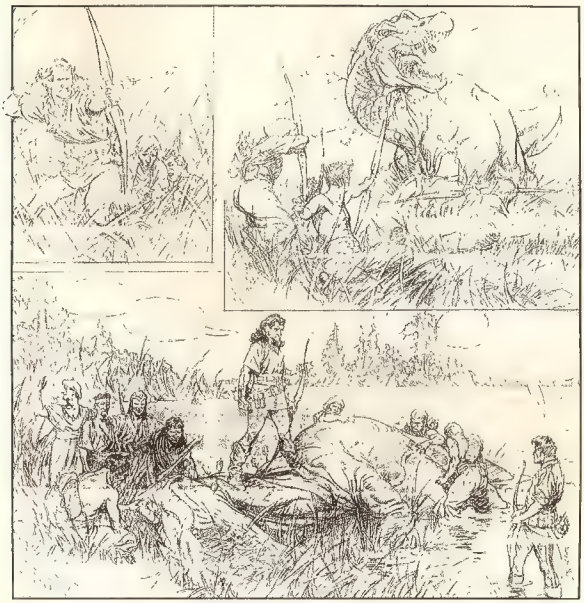
Schultz likens the plot of *Xenozoic Tales* #13 to the classic story "The Most Dangerous Game," where man becomes the ultimate prey.

Hannah and the rest of his cast, Schultz is somewhat ambiguous, because he himself doesn't have more than a general idea what each issue will be about. "I could do an infinite number of issues. I have rough ideas for three or four issues in advance, if that many. I like to keep things as fluid as possible. I'm constantly evolving what I want to do. If the notion comes to me in a few months, I want to be able to change things up on the next issue. I don't have a master plan that I have to follow.

"I look at this as an evolving character study of these people, how they relate to their world and how they feel about their world, rather than like a problem-solving story where they have to resolve something at some point," Schultz continues. "I don't want to have it too predestined, because I think getting there is much more fun. I know my characters pretty well, and I have the background pretty carefully set up and defined. So within that, I just want to tell stories of the various possibilities that can happen in this world to these particular characters."

To the Xenozoic hunter, prey is prey, whether it be beast—or man.

Revealing specific details, Schultz reluctantly admits, "I know that I want to have Jack come back to the city that he was booted out of and retake it. He's the hero. He *must* liberate it eventually. But I just don't want that to be too formulaic. I want to tell it in such a way as to make it fresh and not repeat too many easy tricks that have been done before."



In a world where men are suddenly thrust into the mix with dinosaurs, adjustment is a long and hard journey that few make unscathed.

Schultz plans to keep right on doing *Xenozoic Tales*, no matter how long it takes him to get an issue out. "I see *Xenozoic Tales* as an ongoing project, into perpetuity, pretty much like Hal Foster did with *Prince Valiant*. I've purposely created a world where I wasn't locked into one type of story, to keep me from getting bored with having to do the same type of thing over and over again. And as long as people want to read it, I'm going to want to keep producing it."

Beyond depicting the *Xenozoic* world, Schultz's plans for the future involve working on a project with one of his artistic heroes, Al Williamson. As Schultz recalls, "Al approached [Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Tom DeFalco, it must have been a year-and-a-half ago now, and said, 'If there's one thing that really interests me to draw again, it's *Flash Gordon*. Is there any way you can get the rights?' So, Marvel got *Flash* for Al and he asked me to write it. And I was just floored. It's the dream of a lifetime to work with Al Williamson and *Flash Gordon*."

Aside from *Flash Gordon*, which will be out sometime in late 1994 or early 1995, Schultz has no concrete plans to take on any new projects, though he's never short of ideas. "I have several ideas for graphic novels, self-inclusive stories that I would love to be able to get to someday. But, boy, finding the time for them, that's the problem."

But for now, as *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* roars towards a rendezvous with the Xenozoic Age, Mark Schultz's future seems as limitless as his imagination.

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Kirby

(continued from page 15)

for him. He was a tremendous talent and he left an impression on this business. Let's just say this business would *never* have been the same without Jack Kirby."

After his Fourth World project dissolved, Kirby contented himself with less ambitious characters like *Kamandi, The Demon, Omac, Captain Victory, Silver Star* and a new *Sandman*, usually writing them himself. Health problems forced his retirement in 1983, but he continued drawing for his own pleasure, while spending precious time with his wife, Roz, and many lucky grandchildren. Only last spring, Topps Comics launched its Kirbyverse, built of characters conceived by Kirby and executed by some of his most famous artistic collaborators (CS #34, CS YEARBOOK #2).

Many are the legends that swirl around Jack Kirby. He was such a prolific penciller that the term "Kirby Barrier" was coined to measure the absolute maximum number of pages a comic book artist could pencil in a working day. Kirby was capable of 10 pages, but routinely did six—so six pages became the artistic Sound Barrier other artists fruitlessly attempted to shatter.

Kirby's peers were in awe of him. Those who watched him work whispered that Kirby could draw his intricate comics pages while holding long conversations on wide-ranging topics. Whenever he looked away from the page, his prolific drawing hand continued sketching, unwatched, seemingly unguided. Once, a messenger arrived early to pick up a package of artwork which Kirby had yet to script. The man was invited to wait—and 10 minutes later, a complete issue had been dialogued from start to finish.

Jack Kirby died on an aftershock-filled California morning just weeks after the last comic book he ever drew, *Phantom Force*, was finally published after a 10-year hiatus. The aftershocks of his passing will reverberate well into the next century—a century no doubt to be influenced by his gargantuan legacy.

Perhaps Will Eisner put it best. "Personally, I always suspected that Jack Kirby was really the Incredible Hulk condensed into a lovable guy by some alchemist. He was a valued colleague and I'm a bit diminished by his passing. Out of an internal fantasy of classic heroism that inhabited this compact man came an enduring delineation of the superhero icon. He understood the superhero like no one before him and left us a shining inheritance."

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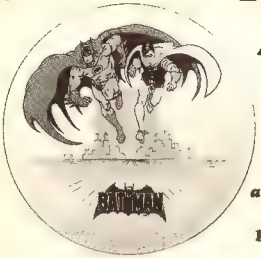

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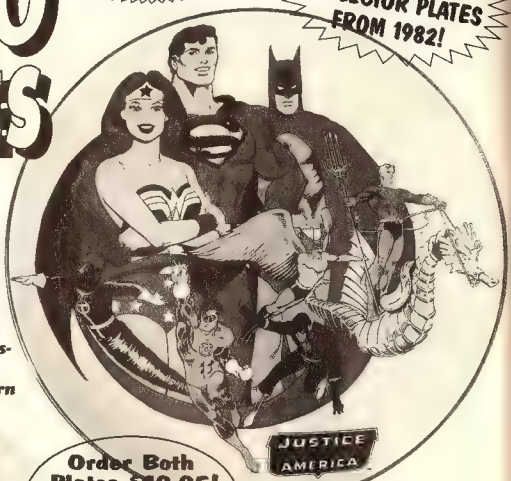

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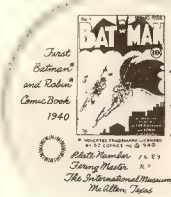

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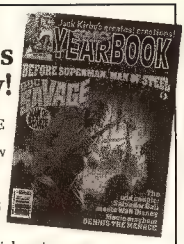

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Marz

(continued from page 19)

is going to work. I decided that once somebody had come in and done all that work, basically revamped the book, it wouldn't exactly be fair of me to come back in after a few months and take things over. It's more fair of me to walk away and let somebody else put their mark on it."

And Marz doesn't sound especially sad to be putting the series behind him. "I have too many irons in the fire, and *Secret Defenders*, by its nature, is one of those books that's something of a chore to work on, because you've got to get permission to have all these characters guest-star and then play things very close to the vest."

With *Cosmic Powers*, *Silver Surfer* and *Green Lantern* going great guns and various other projects percolating at Image and other companies, does Marz ever feel a bit overworked, perhaps?

"Oh, yeah," he says. "Ask my wife, who *never* sees me anymore. In some respects, I bit off more than I could chew comfortably. But each project that came along had some merit, so I said, 'Sure, what the hell? Put another helping on my plate.'

"In leaving *Thor* and *Secret Defenders*, I'm hopefully opening myself up to have more of a life. By the time *Cosmic Powers* comes out, I'll be a little more relaxed. There have been too many 3 and 4 a.m. workdays."

With so many balls in the air at once, you might think Marz would have trouble juggling the various storylines and keeping his work fresh, not to mention coherent, but he shrugs it off. "It's not really a difficulty for me, because the stories come out of the characters. The Silver Surfer is completely different from Green Lantern. I don't have to worry about repeating myself, because the points of origin are so divergent."

As for the "master of cosmic adventure" sobriquet, Marz says he doesn't mind it. "I look at that with wry amusement, because it's nothing I ever aspired to. As long as people like what I'm doing, they can call me whatever they want. It's curious, though. I would much rather sit down and read Raymond Chandler or Stephen King than Isaac Asimov or Arthur C. Clarke. My own tastes run toward crime fiction or horror."

Ron Marz contends that his main worry with the title is the possibility of being typecast. "I would dearly love to write a Daredevil or Batman story," he says. "I would like the chance to write about characters who don't fly on surfboards or wear power rings, who are just regular people."

Spawn

(continued from page 39)

concerned that our two books dent *X-Men* sales than whether my book outsells theirs. If we can bite into sales of Marvel or whoever else is out there, so be it, and I wouldn't mind doing a follow-up next year.

"The only other one I would be interested in is a *Spawn/Spider-Man*, because Spidey is a character that I've written and drawn, so I think I could handle that myself. But, Marvel is doing very well, and they don't need to make the kind of deal that I would want. It would be another cool event that everybody would be talking about. Of course, I haven't even asked them—they might say yes tomorrow!"

McFarlane admits that he and Miller became so enthusiastic about *Spawn/Batman* that they decided to expand the length from 48 pages to 56 pages without raising the price. "It's a 52-page story with some extra artwork, still for $3.95," he says. "It's a good project with some good people at a fair price. Most books like that have been coming out at $4.95, $5.95, even $6.95, but I wanted to be fair to the kids. My overhead is far less than DC's or Marvel's, so I can put a smaller price tag on it and cover my costs. We want the best paper and a reasonable price. Some retailers might say, 'Todd, you could have put an extra buck on it and they still would have bought it,' and they could have made more money on it, so they *might* have a gripe there. But, I look at the big picture—whatever I lose today in profits, I think the retailers will make it back, because *Spawn* will continue to sell every month. I still don't do gimmick covers or double-sized $4 issues. If I did, maybe I would be selling half as many books as I'm selling now. We'll all be taken care of if we treat the customer with dignity."

Even though they're two of the top creators in comics today, McFarlane admits that working on their own, independent *Spawn/Batman* projects has restored their sense of wonder for comics—and turned McFarlane and Miller into kids again.

"When you strip away all of the crap that Frank says and does, and Todd and his bravado, we're just two little comic book fanboys who are getting to do a Batman story without our guardians hanging around us too closely," says Todd McFarlane. "We're just chuckling to ourselves like we've gotten away with something! That enthusiasm is going to make the project that much better. It's nice to remember why you broke into this business, and this has given us that little boy sense of wonder. We're just having a stupid, fun time!"

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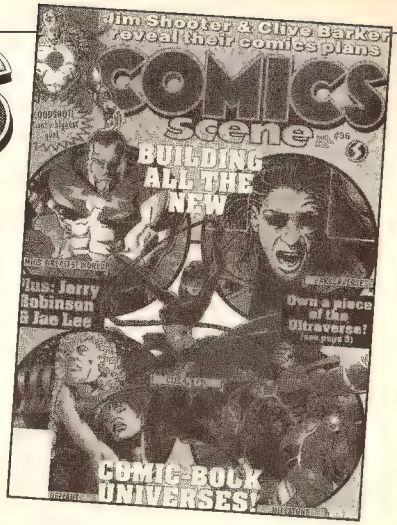

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G.R.I.P.

(continued from page 33)

the '60s as a primary example of the possibilities of graphic storytelling. Other favorite creators include John Buscema and John Romita. Smith says, "Even though I'm not an artist, Romita has always been a major influence, in the way he can do a clean line and tell a story with a lot of emotion."

Smith also credits the instruction he received from one of his close friends, Chuck Dixon. "I've learned a lot from him as far as writing mechanics, style and different ways of saying something in a comic without saying too much."

Word of *The G.R.I.P.* has been circulating throughout the industry for more than a year. Smith says the long marketing lead-time is necessary to create a high level of anticipation among readers and retailers. "Last summer, you saw so much stuff on the market. You looked in the distributor's catalogs, and there were like 900 items being solicited. You have to build up an awareness of your projects so that when they do come out, people remember them and are ready to go."

Gone are the days when comics characters simply existed in one medium. Even if you've got superpowers that border on the god-like, you're nobody unless your image also appears on the big and little screens, in video games and on T-shirts, lunch boxes, milk caps and underwear.

Although the precise details can't be discussed until contracts are final, Smith and others at Eclipse have worked hard to ensure that awareness of *The G.R.I.P.* reaches well beyond the confines of the world of comics.

"With Eclipse, we've built up a really nice contact list for TV, films, and other licensing," says Beau Smith. "Part of the pre-promotion for *The G.R.I.P.* was to send out model sketches and storylines ahead of time. Right now, Hollywood is sniffing around the comics industry like a dog around a fire hydrant. We wanted to start negotiations and line up prospective suitors for this project almost a year ahead of time. We have our choices down to two different film companies for live-action, one for animation. Three different toy companies are talking to us. Many of these people are looking for exclusives on what they think will be mainstream hits."

Whether Eclipse's new superhero title will achieve the kind of mass appeal that marketers dream of remains to be seen. The first order of business is to deliver a comics series that people will enjoy. Then, fans see whether or not the reach of *The G.R.I.P.* exceeds its grasp.

Syphons

(continued from page 43)

strength and can also fire ray blasts. All in all, it's about a five-man team that the Syphons will have a big showdown with in the third issue."

With the plethora of superhero comics on the stands, it might be difficult to spot this particular mini-series. Caputo, White and Curtis aren't particularly worried about that happening, though.

"We had photocopies of issue #1 at most of the shows last year," Caputo says, "for retailers and fans to take a look at, and we got a fantastic response. We think that *Syphons* is going to be a very, very hot book for a number of reasons. The state of the industry is one. Retailers and distributors are being very conservative because of the glut of material last summer. *Syphons* is the kind of title that will sell itself." Part of the reason for Caputo's confidence in *Syphons*, of course, lies in the Mark Beachum factor.

But regardless, the glut doesn't seem to scare Now Comics. "There's an abundance of product out there and we're being conservative about it, but we are slowly moving into the superhero market," says White. "Lined up for later this year, we have two other properties, *Neon Knight* and *Super Cops*. *Super Cops* is a story about these technologically advanced, cybernetically enhanced soldiers used by the police force for special forces-type missions. So, we are slowly moving on expanding our titles, focusing on our own properties."

Syphons may continue beyond the confines of the three-issue mini-series as well. "There's a very good chance [for future *Syphons* projects]," Tony Caputo says. "In fact, we've already planned on it. How it's going to happen and with who, we're not sure. Obviously, Allen will probably stay on as writer. We're not sure if we want to do it as a monthly or as another mini-series. If we did it as a mini-series, we would probably have Mark do the art again, if he would like to, and I think he does. If it becomes a regular monthly, we'll hire an artist who can work on a monthly title."

Allen Curtis concludes, "If the series goes on, one thing that I would like to explore is the fact that the Katari have all this alien technology, which is much more advanced than Earth's technology. And one question that would come up is, 'Well, what would be so bad about having them actually take over, because with all their advanced technology, they could solve many of the problems on Earth.' That *could* become an issue in the future."

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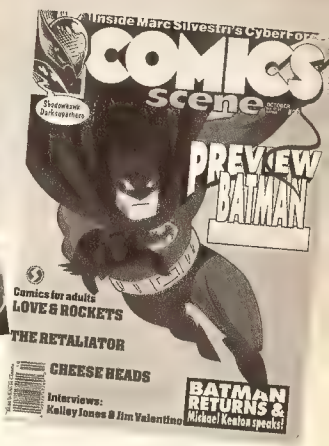

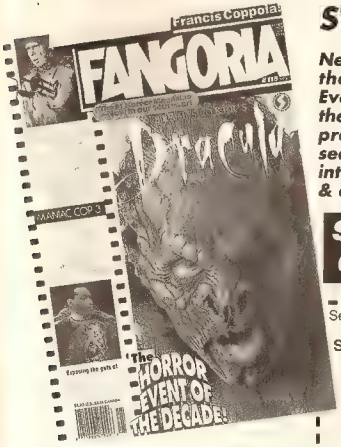

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Will the green giantess make it to the screen?

By PAT JANKIEWICZ

In 1980, when lawyer Jennifer Walters was gunned down by gangsters, she was saved by an emergency blood transfusion from her cousin. This would be strange enough, but since her cousin happened to be David Bruce Banner, the Incredible Hulk, Walters turned into the green, statuesque She-Hulk and launched her very own comics career.

She has since had the distinction of toplining two comic series (*The Savage She-Hulk* and *The Sensational She-Hulk*), battling in *Secret Wars* and even serving as a member of both the Fantastic Four and the Avengers.

Her older, emerald relative, the Hulk, has been Marvel's most successful hero in Hollywood. With the late Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno sharing the title role, *The Incredible Hulk* was a long-running Universal TV series which spawned several later TV movies. Producer Gale Ann Hurd (STARLOG #200) is now developing a *Hulk* feature for Universal (which will employ computer-generated FX). Unlike her powerful cousin, She-Hulk hasn't had the same type of clout in show business.

THE CINEMATIC SHE-HULK

Jill Sherman Donner, a story editor/producer on *The Incredible Hulk* TV series, was the first to attempt a *She-Hulk* show. She wrote and produced an unfinished two-hour TV pilot, *She-Hulk: Metamorphosis*, in May 1991.

This came about because "New World Pictures owned Marvel Comics," says Sherman Donner. "I got a call from New World that they were doing *She-Hulk*. They had gone through a number of [screenplay] drafts and asked me to do one. That was the draft that Bill Bixby [as star] approved."

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She-Hulk even joined the Fantastic Four. Of course, the FF haven't had much luck in the movies either.

Sherman Donner was pleased to find a sensational She-Hulk. "I did the script and we cast [the woman who is now] the new Nike spokesperson, a gorgeous and tall model whose name escapes me. She's a volleyball player and a divinely classic Grecian beauty; this woman looked like a lioness. She was going to be our She-Hulk."

The trouble came in finding her alter-ego. "When it came time to cast the female equivalent of David Banner [the TV series' renaming of the comics' Bruce Banner], we couldn't find an actress," the producer admits. "We cast an actress who we thought was very talented, but the network didn't feel she was strong enough to carry the show. We looked for another actress that [the network felt] *could* carry the show, and the first choice was Melissa Gilbert."

Unfortunately, Gilbert, best known for her work on *Little House on the Prairie*, talked herself out of the part. "Melissa unknowingly said something on a set I was at. She had no idea who I was when she mentioned that someone had sent her [in a disdainful tone] 'something called *She-Hulk*, where I would actually turn green.'

"There's a little residual bitterness about that," Sherman Donner admits. "It was good enough for Bill Bixby—if he could see all the dimensions in that series, I don't think she or her agent realized she would get to play such an interesting character. We needed someone like Bill Bixby, which could have been Melissa Gilbert. It's a lesson for actresses. There are too few characters or TV series written for women for them to be dismissed out of hand, especially after Bixby and [producer] Ken Johnson made it such a classy thing to be involved with. We needed a female name and it seems all the female names the project was offered to just didn't get it." Ironically, Gilbert now voices Batgirl on *Batman: The Animated Series*.

Photo: Pat Jankiewicz

Writer/producer Jill Sherman Donner, a *Hulk* TV veteran, made one attempt at a *She-Hulk* show.

Despite the lack of "a female David Banner," the production began shooting overseas. "We prepped and filmed, the deal being we would go over and [the network] would look at what we shot. The entire crew was in the Caribbean; the only ones over here were the director [Bradford May] and me. Even Bill Bixby was over there.

"At 7 a.m., [casting director] Barbara Claman called up and said, 'I've got three more actresses [to possibly play Jennifer Walters].' The night before, the director and I went out with our spouses, got plotzed and said, 'It's over. We'll call everybody back home tomorrow.' Because of no Jennifer Walters, the project stalled.

"We went in to see the actresses and the plug was pulled. This was after four days of footage was filmed. I think we could have pulled off a good two-hour TV movie, but so much had been spent on pre-producton, travel and all –it would have been one of Bill's last performances as Dr. Banner and now there's no ability to hand over the franchise. They may find a way to do it." (In the last telefilm, *Death of the Incredible Hulk*, Bixby, as Banner, does give a woman a blood transfusion, but nothing more is made of it.)

The writer/producer has fond memories of the aborted project. "The very

Art: John Byrne

Art: Mike Vosburg/Al Milgrom

Art: John Byrne

In comics, this heroine has had two distinctive personas: *The Savage She-Hulk* (a 25-issue run from 1980-82) and *The Sensational She-Hulk* (a more humorous approach begun in 1989).

She's still a bit green with envy. Her cousin, the Hulk, has managed to make it to the screen, but the She-Hulk hasn't.

best part for me was that Bill Bixby and I got to work together, years after the original show. I hadn't seen Bill in awhile, and we did not leave on great terms after *Hulk*. I was now 'all grown up' [she started on the original show just after college] and he was no longer 'Daddy.' We got to work together on it, so it was thrilling."

Sherman Donner saw the jade giantess as a logical TV spin-off to the Hulk. "I played She-Hulk right out of the Ken Johnson legacy. It was strong emotions that triggered her changes, not just anger. We played it absolutely straight—she was a female David Banner. It was a great two hours, because he had terrible guilt.

"Banner knew she had no chance [for survival without his blood transfusion], but now she had to deal with this beast within her. She was an attorney as in the comics, but she wasn't his cousin. She wasn't going to be an attorney after the pilot, she would have been on the road searching for her cure."

After this unfinished effort, *She-Hulk* languished unadapted, until New World tried to launch her again, this time as a feature film. Lovely Brigitte (*Red Sonja*) Nielsen (STARLOG #96) was cast as the transforming titan. Larry (*It's Alive*) Cohen was set to direct from a script

Design & Layout: Lan H. Leaks

Photos: Copyright 1993 New World Productions

In pre-production photos, Brigitte Nielsen got green for a second *She-Hulk* project involving director Larry Cohen and writer Carl Gottlieb.

Art: Mike Vosburg/Terry Austin

No matter what, Sherman Donner believes fans haven't seen the last of She-Hulk.

by Carl (*Jaws*) Gottlieb. A pre-production photo of Nielsen as the character was released and published in various places. The film's starting date was announced. But this project also collapsed.

Gottlieb, a veteran writer, was quite fond of *She-Hulk* and foresees the project's return. "A producer named Tamara Assayev has been running with it. *She-Hulk* is a really interesting project, because you have to make a parallel universe where a six-foot tall green woman walks around and *nobody* says anything. It's like, 'Oh, *her*,' " laughs Gottlieb.

"It was designed as a vehicle for Brigitte Nielsen, 'the warrior queen.' I think it has gotten bogged down in financial problems and is trying to find a backer, because I haven't heard anything about the project for months. Beyond that, I don't know what they're gonna do, because I stopped working on it when they had no money."

Gottlieb worked with Stan Lee, She-Hulk's creator, on the film. "I like Stan, he's obviously a giant in the industry with a great sense of who his audience is. Stan controls the franchise, so the film will be whatever Stan likes. I was exploring ideas on it with Stan, who has his own very specific ideas on what the movie *should* be like. Whoever does the adaptation will be a partner with Stan Lee in the conceptualizing.

"One thing you need as an adapter is to be free to do whatever you want. When you explore everything, you can start to narrow in. With most adaptations, the problem is not what to include but what to cut—what do you leave out of the story? In *Jaws*, we cut stuff that was totally extraneous to the story. In *She-Hulk*, there's stuff you must leave out, but someone who builds a franchise in one medium might think those elements are necessary. We disagreed over what elements were necessary."

Gottlieb feels there might not be much room in the film for the Incredible Hulk. "He would probably appear only in a prologue where we show how she became the She-Hulk. You can do two stories: a story in which she already exists, like *Batman*, or you can do 'How she became the She-Hulk,' which is a story in itself. The first half would explain how she becomes the She-Hulk, and then she has one or two adventures.

"It's more fun to make a movie about a universe where She-Hulk exists as an ongoing entity—that would be the *best* use of the character."

There are two different major interpretations of the She-Hulk in the Marvel Universe. When Lee launched the series, She-Hulk was a feral, angry beast. In the mid-80s, writer/artist John Byrne shaped her into a witty heroine. Gottlieb notes that "Being from comedy myself, I prefer the comedic take on the character. The best superheroes are the ones who laugh at themselves.

"The success of the first *Superman* movie was because Chris Reeve, as an actor, brought a sense of irony to the character. It's the same with Batman and any successful superheroes who laugh a little bit—not the ones who make fun of the character, but the ones who are *aware* of the situation's extravagance."

One should probably not count She-Hulk out. As the hulking heroine has survived one failed comic series, another which pitted her against the worst villains in Marvel history (including the Terrible Toad-Men), she'll probably reach the big or small screen in some incarnation. As Jill Sherman Donner notes, "I think they ought to make *She-Hulk*—the time is right. It would be a shame not to do that character."

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Now, here's the Thing. And he isn't entirely happy about being sentenced to limbo along with *The Fantastic Four* film.

Farewell to the Foursome

Call it "The Fantastic Fold." The live-action *Fantastic Four* movie (CS #34) has been shelved, just as the film was to be completed and three weeks before its scheduled world premiere. Bill Bromiley (Concorde Pictures' vice president) says Constantin Films, which owns the movie rights to the Marvel Comics characters, exercised its option to buy back the movie and there are *no* plans for theatrical or home video release.

Director Chris (*Home Alone*) Columbus, a longtime comics fan who also scripted *Gremlins* and *Young Sherlock Holmes*, wants to do a big-budget version of *The Fantastic Four* for 20th Century Fox. Thus, according to Bromiley, it appears doubtful that the original film will be seen by the public in the immediate future.

"We were like the little train that could," says Alex Hyde-White, who played Reed Richards (CS #38). "We were finally on the track, working our way up the hill and were *almost* there. Then, we found out there was never any track."

The timing of Constantin's buy-out was especially shocking. Concorde had arranged for a world premiere at the Mall of America in Minneapolis on January 19 and was going to test market the film in Minneapolis and Nashville before a planned national release in March. The studio even arranged for the actors to appear on a float in the Tournament of Roses Parade on New Year's Day and printed the movie's poster.

Director Oley Sassone squeezed the budget for everything he could get. That budget, by the way, was reputed to be $5 million, though Concorde head Roger Corman says it was actually $1.4 million. And others suggest the figure's closer to $750,000.

Sassone brought in Mr. Film for additional special FX and had a 40-piece orchestra score the movie. Concorde intended to strike 500 prints of the film, which Bromiley hoped would gross $20-30 million at the box office.

A buy-out of *FF* film rights was rumored last August, with Steven Spielberg's name linked, but did not happen. One source suggests that 20th Century Fox wanted the movie all along, but waited until getting a director attached. A live-action *X-Men* movie is also on Fox's docket.

"How are they going to do *X-Men* and then *also* put *The Fantastic Four* project into development?" Hyde-White wonders, still holding out hope Concorde's version will be released.

Hyde-White and Michael Bailey Smith, who played Ben Grimm, had been promoting the movie around the country since July 1993, including a stop at the San Diego Comics Con.

They attended comics cons and autographed stills at comic shops. Hyde-White even stopped by COMICS SCENE's office to chit-chat. Smith, who will be appearing in *Cyborg 3* this summer, says he signed some 10,000 autographs at comics shows. He had completed voice-over work for Carl Ciarfalio's Thing stunt-acting in November.

"It's very sad. It almost feels like someone died," Smith declares. "We put our hearts and souls into the movie, and it's very frustrating."

—Rob Allstetter

Faust the Movie

While *Dr. Strange* writer David Quinn continues to work on *Faust*, a 12-part series created by Quinn and artist Tim Vigil, he's also awaiting a film version of *Faust*.

"Stuart [*Re-Animator*] Gordon is the director," Quinn says. "Tim and I have been working very carefully with him. I've written about three different versions of the screenplay, and I'll probably write anther three before we shoot." Vigil will do the movie's storyboards.

Quinn says that Gordon has had a lot of input on the script. "He has given us great ideas, and we've also fought with him too, I'll be honest. We don't like some of his ideas. We've wrestled with him on occasion. He said he wants to be true to the book, so we keep coming back to, '*This* is the book. *This* is the character. Let's not sell it out.'

"Genre Entertainment is the production company. They're in weekly sessions, working out the budget and getting the backing needed to make the film.

"We've gotten to the point now where people are not just saying, 'Well, keep us in mind,' but they're making their bids," Quinn notes. "Actors—I can't really mention their names until they're signed—but they're actors we like and respect, and who have a certain box office value."

Quinn says, "Everyone who ever saw the comic and the script thought it was interesting. But, then they started taking us seriously when they heard we had a real director. They started to trust us a little bit. And they'll trust us even more with some actor attached that people will say, 'Ah, I'll go see it.' "

Faust is the sex-and-gore-drenched story of John Jaspers, a violence-prone mental ward patient who grows talons and, as the "Singing Slasher," goes on a homicidal spree, offing all the pesky fellows that bother his psychotherapist and lover Jade De Camp. Another character is Claire, who delights in such activities as plunging her thumbs through a lover's eyeballs, killing them instantly in a sort of coitus interruptus fatalis.

According to Quinn, the movie's storyline follows the comic pretty closely. "Tim and I have created a comic book that, if you did it as a movie, would run about eight hours. To us, that's the story. So, we had to work *really* hard to combine scenes and characters, to lose things. Some people are going to get real scared when they hear me say, 'lose things.' We're not trying to do a total bastardization, but we *have* had to simplify, combine and drop out some of the coolest things, just to make it workable."

Will Faust slash his way on to the screen? David Quinn, Tim Vigil and Stuart Gordon are working on a movie project.

Quinn relates the story behind the search for the actress to play Claire. "Oh man," he says, "we've had a hell of a time. Stuart keeps losing friends by showing them the script. It's possible to shoot the script and get an R rating. We think. We *hope*. We plan to do two versions—an R-rated theatrical and an unrated video."

As far as the chances of *Faust* actually making it to the big screen, David Quinn doesn't let himself worry about that. "You never know," he says. "I would have died this year of anticipation if I ever counted on it happening. We just continue to work as if it *is* happening. Spend a little time on it, keep thinking about it, and then get back to work on the comic."

—Harley Jebens

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